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Turkey allows US to use key air base to strike the Islamic State

JOSH LEDERMAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Turkey has agreed to let the U.S. military launch airstrikes against the Islamic State from a key air base near the Syrian border, senior U.S. officials said Thursday, giving a boost to the U.S.-led coalition while drawing Turkey deeper into the conflict.

President Barack Obama and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan finalized the deal in a phone call Wednesday, officials said, following months of U.S. appeals and delicate negotiations over the use of Incirlik and other bases in Turkey. Frustrated by Obama's focus on fighting IS instead of Syrian President Bashar Assad, Turkey's government had resisted the move, but in recent days a surge in Islamic State activity in Turkey has brought concerns about the militant group to the forefront.

American officials said access to the base in southern Turkey, not far from IS strongholds across the border in Syria, would allow the U.S. to move more swiftly and nimbly against IS targets. If the agreement holds, the U.S.-led coalition will be positioned to conduct better surveillance over Syria and act quicker on intelligence than when it was limited to launching flights from places like Iraq, Jordan and the Gulf states.

Under the deal, the U.S. military will be allowed to launch manned and unmanned flights from Incirlik; in the past, only unmanned drone flights were allowed. Turkey has yet to publicly confirm the agreement, which U.S. officials discussed on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to comment publicly. Citing operational security, the White House declined to confirm the agreement, but noted that Obama and Erdogan had agreed to "deepen our cooperation" against IS in their phone call Wednesday.

"Turkey is a critical partner in degrading and defeating ISIL, and we appreciate the essential support Turkey provides to the international coalition across the many lines of effort," said Alistair Baskey, a spokesman for the White House's National Security Council, using an alternative acronym for the militant group. Incirlik Air Base, located across the border from the Syrian city of Aleppo, is a joint U.S.-Turkish installation that houses the U.S. Air Force's 39th Air Base Wing. Its proximity to IS-controlled territory in Syria — including Raqqa, the group's de facto capital — makes it an attractive launching pad for U.S. airstrikes against the militant group. Turkey shares a 1,250-kilometer (775-mile) border with Syria and with Iraq, where IS also controls broad swaths of territory.

Turkey, a NATO ally and onetime close U.S. partner, has resisted getting embroiled too deeply in the U.S.-led fight against IS. The move to allow Turkish soil to be used to launch U.S. airstrikes appeared to mark a significant shift in approach.

Although Turkey is part of the U.S.-led coalition, it has limited its role out of concern that Washington's overall strategy for Syria is flawed. To Turkey's dismay, Obama has prioritized fighting IS over opposing Assad in Syria's civil war. For months, as the U.S. requested consent to strike from Incirlik, Turkey held off, while continuing to press Obama to broaden his mission.

It was unclear whether Turkey had extracted a commitment from the U.S. to take on Assad more aggressively in exchange for using Incirlik. But in an apparent nod to Turkey's priorities, the White House said Obama and Erdogan had also decided to deepen cooperation on "our work to bring about a political settlement to the conflict in Syria."

Turkey's shift on Incirlik came as the country

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A U.S. Air Force plane takes off from the Incirlik airbase, in southern Turkey. Turkey has agreed to let the U.S. military use the key air base near the border with Syria to launch airstrikes against the Islamic State, senior Obama administration officials said July 23, 2015, giving a boost to the U.S.-led coalition amid a surge of violence in Turkey blamed on IS-linked militants.

(AP Photo/Vadim Ghirda, File)

is on higher alert following a series of deadly attacks and unsettling signs of increased IS activity in Turkey. On Thursday, IS

militants fired from Syrian territory at a Turkish military outpost. Turkish retaliated, killing at least one IS militant. And earlier in the

week, a suicide bombing that Turkey blamed on IS militants killed 32 people in southeastern Turkey, near the Syrian border. □

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Prosecutor: Woman's autopsy revealed no evidence of homicide

**MICHAEL GRACZYK
 JASON KEYSER
 Associated Press
 HEMPSTEAD, Texas (AP)**

— The autopsy of a black woman who was found dead in a Texas jail revealed no injuries that would suggest she was killed by someone else, authorities said Thursday. Waller County prosecutor Warren Diepraam said the autopsy showed that 28-year-old Sandra Bland had no defensive injuries on her hands that would typically indicate a struggle.

Some lacerations or abrasions were found on her wrists. Those were consistent with a struggle while being handcuffed. The marks around Bland's neck were consistent with a suicide by hanging, Diepraam said.

Bland also had about 30 small cuts on her wrist that were probably self-inflicted within the last few weeks, he added.



Photo shows the Waller County jail cell where Sandra Bland was found dead in Hempstead, Texas. Bland was arrested and taken to the jail about 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of Houston on July 10 and found dead July 13. Officials say Bland hanged herself with a plastic garbage bag in her jail cell, a contention her family and supporters dispute.

(AP Photo/Pat Sullivan)

She was arrested in a traffic stop three days before she was found in her cell on July 13. Her family and friends dispute the official finding that she killed herself using a noose fashioned from a plastic garbage bag.

Texas Rangers and the FBI are investigating. Also Thursday, the wom-

an's sister confirmed that Bland had taken prescription medication for seizures in the past.

Booking documents filled out for Bland after her arrest indicate she told staff at the jail that she had epilepsy and was taking medication for it. The forms identify the drug as Kep-

pra. Other forms, however, say she was not taking medication.

Company information on Keppra, which is sold in regular and extended-release forms, says that "antiepileptic drugs, including Keppra and Keppra XR, may cause suicidal thoughts or actions in a very small number of people, about 1 in 500."

Sharon Cooper told The Associated Press that her sister suffered from seizures about a decade ago but had not had any in recent years and was not on medication.

The medication was not the only inconsistency in the jail-intake papers. One questionnaire said Bland took pills in 2015 in an attempt to kill herself after losing a baby. A separate form filled out by another jail employee said the suicide attempt occurred in 2014.

Cooper said her sister had

a miscarriage in May 2014, but got through it. Cooper also said she was not aware of any suicide attempt.

Asked if her sister could have been getting treatment without relatives knowing, Cooper said the family's five sisters were "above board" with each other and, if anything, "overshared."

"If it was happening, I would have known," she said. Preliminary results of an independent autopsy arranged by the family showed bruising to deep muscle tissue in Bland's back, consistent with the officer having his knee there, Cooper said.

She would not say if there were other findings. Full results will not be in for a couple of weeks. A woman who occupied a jail cell next to Bland said the Chicago-area woman was emotional and wept often during her three days in jail. □

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Hispanics love me, Trump declares at Mexican border

LAREDO, Texas (AP)—Donald Trump paid a visit to the Mexican border Thursday, predicting Hispanics would love him as president despite roiling the Republican race by branding Mexican immigrants rapists and criminals. His comments have sparked a feud with exasperated Republican rivals who find the billionaire's words worrisome as they court the surging bloc of Latino voters.

Trump's in-and-out border visit came as the businessman and reality TV host has dominated attention in the Republican presidential race and seen his ratings roar, though he remains a longshot candidate for the White House. He has thrust himself into America's heated immigration debate, one that has put Republicans in a bind as they try to woo Hispanics, the biggest U.S. minority and one that has voted overwhelmingly Democratic in recent presidential elections. "There's great danger with the illegals," Trump told reporters, referring to the millions of Americans living in the U.S. illegally, many of them Hispanic. But he claimed a "great relationship" with Hispanics, even as Latino leaders have come at him with blistering criticism for his painting Mexican immigrants as criminals.

"I'll take jobs back from China, I'll take jobs back from Japan," Trump said. "The Hispanics are going to get those jobs, and they're going to love Trump."

Republicans are eager to avoid the fate of their 2012 presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, who earned just 27 percent of the Hispanic vote after endorsing "self-

deportation" as a viable policy for solving America's immigration crisis. The renewed focus on immigration has revealed a growing willingness among Republican presidential contenders to let immigrants living in the U.S. illegally remain here. Such a position is derided as "amnesty" by the Republicans' conservative tea party wing, yet it is quietly becoming the majority view in the 2016 Republican presidential class. Trump has overshadowed the carefully-crafted views held by Republican heavyweights. The bilingual Jeb Bush, the brother and son of presidents and former governor of Florida, offered a distinctly different message—and spoke partly in Spanish while campaigning in New Hampshire.

"A Republican will never be elected president of the United States again unless we campaign like this,"



Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump waves after arriving for a visit to the U.S. Mexico border in Laredo, Texas, Thursday, July 23, 2015.

(AP Photo/LM Otero)

Bush said, gesturing with open arms.

"Unless we campaign openly — where we campaign in every nook and cranny of this country, where we go campaign in the Latino communities, fast-growing communities all across this country that will make a difference in

who the next president is going to be."

Trump set up a dramatic scene in advance of his own campaign trip, saying he was putting himself in "great danger" by coming to the border area across from the volatile Mexican city of Nuevo Laredo.

A local border patrol union

pulled out of events involving him. Patrol agents had planned to accompany Trump to the border and hold a meeting with him but canceled after consultations with their national union, the National Border Patrol Council, said local union president Hector Garza. □

Clinton cheers US state's removal of rebel flag

BILL BARROW

Associated Press

WEST COLUMBIA, South Carolina (AP)—Hillary Rodham Clinton praised South Carolina leaders for removing the rebel Confederate flag from Statehouse grounds but said Americans must "dig deeper" against racial injustice.

It was Clinton's first campaign appearance in South Carolina, which holds the South's first presidential primary, since the massacre at a black church in Charleston prompted the rebel flag's removal by Republican Gov. Nikki Haley and the Republican-run

Legislature.

"Anybody who says we don't have more progress to make is blind," she told more than 400 people at a black church in West Columbia, near the state Capitol, where the Confederate banner was removed earlier this month in a dramatic, bipartisan ceremony. Those who point to progress, she added, have "not kept their eyes and ears open."

The white suspect in the Charleston massacre appeared in photos waving rebel Confederate flags, and survivors told police that he hurled racial in-

sults during the attack. The shootings renewed a movement to remove the rebel flag from the public sphere around the South. The flag, flown by armies of the secessionist pro-slavery Confederacy during the Civil War, is claimed by some white southerners as a symbol of regional and ancestral pride but has also been used by white supremacists.

Clinton offered a harsh assessment of a criminal justice system she said is unfair to blacks.

"There are clear, undeniable racial disparities," she said. "We shouldn't have to

gloss it over or pretend it will just go away if we are nicer to each other." She said: "We have to dig deeper," and that all Americans should rally behind the cry, "black lives matter."

The phrase spread rapidly after the deaths of unarmed African-Americans at the hands of police, including Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina. The white officer who shot Brown was not charged. In the South Carolina case, the officer captured on video shooting Scott in the back has since been fired and charged with murder. □



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Oklahoma police find 5 family members stabbed to death

J. JUOZAPAVICIUS

Associated Press

BROKEN ARROW, Oklahoma (AP) —

Oklahoma police responding to an emergency call in which no one spoke found a gruesome scene at a suburban Tulsa home — five members of a family dead or dying from stabbing and a sixth wounded but alive near the front door.

Broken Arrow Police Cpl. Leon Calhoun said Thursday that two teenage sons were apprehended and expected to be charged in the deaths of their parents, three siblings and an attack on a fourth sibling. A fifth sibling, a 2-year-old girl, was found unharmed and transferred to state custody.

"It certainly is shocking. I'm shocked," neighbor

Patricia Statham said. "I feel so bad for everyone who walks into that house. You can see it in the faces of the officers when they come out."

Calhoun identified the parents killed as David and April Bever, ages 52 and 44. He identified one of the two suspects in the deaths as their 18-year-old son, Robert Bever. The other suspect, a 16-year-old son, was not identified because he is a juvenile.

The three children found dead were boys ages 12 and 7, and a girl 5 years old, Calhoun said. The two survivors were a 13-year-old girl, who was injured, and the 2-year-old girl. None of those names were released.

At the scene, investigators stepped gingerly around

pools of blood, their feet covered to help protect the evidence. Other officers erected black tarps and blue tarps to veil two bodies in the front yard as the sun rose Thursday. A gust of wind blew down one section of the makeshift wall, revealing a bloody white sheet.

"I've been here 19 years and I don't know if we've had more than three homicides in a year," said Broken Arrow Police Cpl. Leon Calhoun, the department spokesman. "This is the worst single criminal event in Broken Arrow history."

According to Calhoun, officers responding to an emergency call at about 11:30 Wednesday night could not enter the house through the front door but heard moaning and found another way inside. They came across the injured 13-year-old first and dragged her outside for fear the killer might still be in the house.

And they did the same with two other victims, not knowing whether they



This photo shows Robert Bever, a suspect in the stabbing deaths of an Oklahoma family in Broken Arrow, Thursday, July 23, 2015. Broken Arrow Police spokesman Cpl. Leon Calhoun said Thursday that Bever and another teenage son were apprehended and expected to be charged in the deaths of their parents, three siblings and an attack on a fourth sibling. (Broken Arrow Police Department via AP)

were dead or alive.

Elsewhere in the house, they found three more bodies.

A tracking dog led officers to 16- and 18-year-old brothers in woods near the house. □

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Report: Western wildfires threatening homes

MATT VOLZ
KRISTIN J. BENDER

Associated Press

HELENA, Montana (AP) —

Firefighters braced Thursday for a fresh run by a wildfire that sent tourists fleeing from hotels and campgrounds in Montana's Glacier National Park, while a blaze threatening hundreds of homes in Northern California shot flames 100 feet (30 meters) in the air.

Both states are ravaged by drought, and rising temperatures and strengthening winds greeted newly arrived crews taking aim at the blaze in the Northern Rocky Mountains. It has burned more than 6 square

miles (15.6 sq. kilometers) along the eastern side of the Montana park during prime tourist season, when lodges and inns have been booked for months.

Some visitors packed up and left the region immediately after seeing smoke rising above ridge tops, while others diverted to different parts of the park. Officials said only a small part of Glacier's 1,718 square miles (4,450 sq. kilometers) have been closed by the fire, and most of its top attractions on the east and west sides are still open.

The fire ignited Tuesday and then swept along ridges near the scenic Going-

to-the-Sun Road, the park's most popular roadway, heading toward the small community of St. Mary on the park's eastern boundary.

More than 600 campers who fled the St. Mary Glacier Park KOA on Wednesday have been replaced by officials using the campgrounds as a staging area to fight the fire just over a ridge a few miles away.

The fire destroyed Baring Creek Cabin, a historic backcountry structure, torched one abandoned car and closed 21 miles (35 kilometers) of the 50-mile (80-kilometer) Going-to-the-Sun Road. □

Senate panel votes to lift decades-long Cuba travel ban



Cuban Lazaro Cudilleiro holds a banner in front of the United States Embassy in Havana, Cuba, Monday, July 20, 2015. A new era began in Cuba and U.S. relations with little fanfare when an agreement between the two nations to resume normal ties on July 20 came into force just after midnight Sunday and the diplomatic missions of each country were upgraded from interests sections to embassies.

(AP Photo/Desmond Boylan)

ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican-controlled Senate panel has voted to lift a decades-long U.S. ban on travel to Cuba, giving a boost to President Barack Obama's moves to ease travel restrictions and open up relations with the Castro-governed nation. The Senate Appropriations

Committee also voted to block enforcement of a law prohibiting banks and other U.S. businesses from financing sales of U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba. The Obama administration issued rules in January to significantly ease travel restrictions to Cuba and allow regularly scheduled flights for the first time. The Senate Appropriations Committee

18-12 vote comes just days after the U.S. and Cuba formally ended more than a half-century of estrangement by re-establishing diplomatic relations cut off during the Cold War. "We have the opportunity to increase the likelihood that Cuban people have greater liberties and freedom with the ability to connect with them," said

sponsor Jerry Moran, a Republican. "I also would say that as Americans we have certain freedoms that we cherish, and Americans can travel around the globe today without exception — no country is totally prohibited with the exception of Cuba."

The House Appropriations Committee has moved in the opposite direction, but the intra-party disagreement among Republicans makes it far less likely that the Republican-controlled Congress will try to use spending bills to challenge Obama's rapprochement with Cuba. The House provision would block new rules issued in January that would significantly ease travel restrictions to Cuba and allow regularly scheduled flights for the first time.

The Senate language goes beyond the administration rules, which lifted a requirement that U.S. travelers obtain a license from the Treasury Department before travelling to Cuba. Instead, all that is required is for travelers to assert that

their trip would serve educational, religious or other permitted purposes.

"Positive change in Cuba will take time," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, a Democrat. "But it will come not as a result of stubborn nostalgia by a vociferous few for the Batista years, but by visiting Cuba, listening to the Cuban people, and engaging with them." Fulgencio Batista was Cuba's dictator before he was overthrown by Fidel Castro in 1959.

The hospitality industry and other business sectors are still blocked from doing business in Cuba. Marriott International President Arne Sorenson just returned from Cuba and is representative of many companies eager to do business there, especially as more Americans travel to the island.

"With travel to Cuba now surging, existing Cuban hotels are full and hotel companies from other countries are racing to tie up as many of the new hotels as they can before the likes of Marriott and our U.S. competitors show up," Sorenson said. □

Applications for US unemployment aid plummet to 42-year low: report

C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six years after a brutal recession that wiped out more than 8.5 million jobs, Americans are now enjoying a nearly unprecedented level of job security. The number of people seeking U.S. unemployment aid plunged last week to the lowest in nearly 42 years. Applications for jobless benefits are a proxy for layoffs, so the low level indicates that employers are keeping their staffs and likely hiring at a steady pace. Weekly applications for unemployment benefits fell 26,000 to 255,000, the fewest since November 1973, the Labor Department said

Thursday. If the data were adjusted for the growth of the U.S. population since then, last week's figure would likely be an all-time low. The four-week average, a less volatile number, fell 4,000 to 278,500. The average has fluctuated around that figure since May.

That is a far cry from the depths of the 2008-2009 Great Recession, when more than 600,000 people were applying for jobless aid each week.

One reason for last week's drop, however, is that auto plants and other factories close briefly in July to prepare for next year's models. That pushed up applications in the previous

two weeks. Now that many factories have reopened, applications have fallen back. "We should always take this summer period for claims with a grain of salt," said Jennifer Lee, an economist at BMO Capital Markets. "From a long-term perspective, we're still looking at claims bobbing around at the lowest level in ages." "Employers are holding tightly onto their staff," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "This is the flipside of the difficulty they report in finding qualified people." With layoffs down, employers are also hiring more to meet greater demand for their goods and services. □

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US-trained Iraqi troops to join Ramadi counteroffensive



The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service forces participate in a training exercise as U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter observes at its academy on the Baghdad Airport Complex in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, July 23, 2015. Carter is on a weeklong tour of the Middle East focused on reassuring allies about Iran and assessing progress in the coalition campaign against the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

(AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, Pool)

ROBERT BURNS

AP National Security Writer

BAGHDAD (AP) — For the first time, Iraqi troops trained by the U.S.-led coalition have been added to the assault force Iraq is using to retake the city of Ramadi, a U.S. military offi-

cial said Thursday.

The news that about 3,000 U.S.-trained Iraqi army soldiers were added to the fight in recent days was disclosed to U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who spent the day getting updates and meeting with

U.S. and Iraqi officials and commanders in Baghdad. It was Carter's first visit to Iraq since he took office in February.

The visit comes at an important moment for the Iraqi government just before the counteroffensive on Ra-

madi. The actual assault on the city has not yet begun, but a Pentagon spokesman, Army Col. Steve Warren, said it could start within several weeks.

The Ramadi campaign will be a crucial test not only for the Iraqi government led by Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, but also for the U.S. strategy of relying on Iraqi security forces, operating in coordination with U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, to overcome the smaller Islamic State forces.

President Barack Obama has opted not to commit U.S. ground combat forces to Iraq, saying the only lasting solution is for Iraq to fight for itself.

Warren said the Pentagon chief was told that two Iraqi army brigades totaling about 3,000 soldiers joined the Ramadi counteroffensive within the past three days to five days. "This is a development we are very satisfied to hear," Warren said.

He said one of those newly trained units advanced about 4 miles toward Ramadi within the last 24 hours.

Warren said U.S. officials

received Iraqi battlefield reports that say Iraqi forces have advanced to or near Anbar University in Ramadi. But he said the U.S. has no independent confirmation of that. In addition to the 3,000 newly trained Iraqi soldiers now operating in the Ramadi area, about 500 Sunni Arab tribal fighters have also recently joined the advancing force, Warren said. The Iraqi government intends to exclude all Shiite militias from the Ramadi operation, even those said to be under control of the Iraqi government — a key move toward getting the troops to work together effectively.

In a photo opportunity with Carter, al-Abadi noted the recent delivery of Iraq's first F-16 fighter jets from the U.S. as a sign of the value of U.S.-Iraqi relations. But he made it clear the battle against IS was Iraq's.

"It is Iraqi forces that are fighting on the ground and that are liberating remaining territory from Daesh," he said, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

Continued on page 27



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Saudi-backed Yemeni troops, fighters gain control of Aden

AHMED AL-HAJ
Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — Yemeni troops and local militias, backed by the Saudi-led coalition, seized full control of the strategic port city of Aden after repelling Shiite rebels from their last holdout in this southern city and were pushing on Thursday to solidify their gains, military officials said.

The battle for Aden has been the epicenter of Yemen's conflict over the past several weeks. The rebels, known as Houthis, seized the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, last September and then began pressing their advance south. Fierce fighting over Aden broke out in March, sparking the Saudi-led airstrikes that have been targeting the rebels to halt their advance.

More than 1,690 civilians

have been killed since late March, according to figures released by the United Nations this week.

The anti-Houthi forces made significant gains in Aden over the past week, with battles to drive the rebels and their allies out of the city stretching on for days.

The troops were able to take control late Wednesday of the presidential compound, which sits on rocks that jut out into the sea and houses a number of villas beside the presidential palace. Several rebels were captured and an undetermined number were killed in the fighting, officials said.

The compound had been briefly used as base by the now-exiled President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi earlier this year. □

After delays, construction begins on destroyed homes in Gaza

FARES AKRAM

Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)

— Undeterred by scorching heat, Palestinian workers in Gaza on Thursday hammered nails into wooden boards and jolted steel bars as they lay the foundations for the first group of homes to be rebuilt since the war with Israel last summer. The work brought a rare glimmer of hope to a territory that remains devastated a year after the fighting.

The long-awaited reconstruction started in Shijaiyah, one of Gaza's areas that was hardest hit during the 50-day war between Israel and the Islamic militant Hamas group.

"Thank God!" said Sharif Harara, 50, who stood under the sun as the workers laid the foundation of his new residence. "After a year of suffering in rental homes, our God brought



Palestinian workers rebuild a house which was destroyed during the last summer's war between Israel and Hamas, as the long-awaited reconstruction began in Shijaiyah neighborhood eastern Gaza City on Thursday, July 23, 2015. Construction has started on the first homes that will be rebuilt in the Gaza Strip since the devastating war destroyed much of the territory's infrastructure. (AP Photo/Khalil Hamra)

his mercy."

Last year's fighting was the third and most devastating war between the bitter enemies since Hamas seized control of Gaza in

2007 from the rival Palestinian Authority, dominated by President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party. Over 2,200 Palestinians, including hundreds of civilians,

and 73 people on the Israeli side were killed in the fighting.

The war also destroyed 11,900 homes and damaged about 140,000

dwelling, according to the Palestinian Minister of Public Works Mufeed al-Hasayneh, whose ministry oversees the rebuilding.

One year later, thousands of houses with minor or moderate damage have been repaired under strict guidelines agreed to by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations. But so far, no new homes have been built to replace those that were completely destroyed.

Reconstruction efforts have also been hampered by unmet international funding promises, the rift between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, which remains the internationally recognized government for the Palestinians, and continued Israeli security restrictions — though Israel has recently taken steps to increase the flow of goods into Gaza. □

Syria's 2 main opposition groups agree on 'roadmap'

ZEINA KARAM

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP)

— Syria's two main political opposition groups agreed on Thursday on a unified "roadmap" for a political solution to the country's long-running civil war, representatives of the groups said. The two parties have been trying for years to reach a common understanding on how to end the war in Syria. Their agreement came as the U.N. envoy, Staffan de Mistura, was in Damascus to press efforts to find a political solution to the country's war.

But violence continued on the ground and suspected Islamic State militants fired at a Turkish military outpost from inside Syrian territory on Thursday, killing a Turkish soldier and wounding two others. Turkish troops retaliated to the attack and at least one IS militant was killed, according to Turkish official Suleyman Tapsiz, the governor for the Kilis province.

The attack follows a suicide bombing in a Turkish town near the Syrian border on Monday which

killed 32 people. Authorities have blamed the attack on militants linked to IS.

Meanwhile in Brussels, where the Syrian opposition groups have been meeting, representatives

of the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) and the National Coordination Body for the Forces of Democratic Change (NCB) said they would announce details of their agreement at a press conference the

following day.

Members of the SNC, the main political group in exile, have long accused the Damascus-based NCB, whose leaders have been tolerated by the Syrian government, of be-

ing too lenient and even complicit with President Bashar Assad's government. Members of the NCB, in turn, have often accused the SNC of being bankrolled by oil-rich Arab Gulf countries. □

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Greek store closures spike as recession, austerity return



A woman passes a kiosk selling tourist souvenirs in Athens, Thursday, July 23, 2015. Discussions over Greece's third bailout in five years are set to begin in Athens imminently after Greece's parliament approved Thursday tough new conditions set by European creditors.

(AP Photo/Giannis Papanikos)
DEREK GATOPOULOS

Associated Press
ATHENS, Greece (AP) —

Giorgos Prasinoudis ran his motorcycle repair shop in Athens for three decades, through good times and bad. Now a "For Sale" sign hangs outside the window. Empty storefronts are again a feature of Greece's towns and cities as spending dries up in a crisis that put Greece's future in the euro in doubt. The tales of hardship are repeated up and down the country of nearly 11 million people. In Pradinoudis' neighborhood of Koukaki, a bakery, grocer, barber and several clothing shops on the main

commercial drag have disappeared behind white-washed windows — all victims of the crisis.

"It's over for Greece," said Pradinoudis. "We won't recover for another 50 years."

The downturn worsened after the late-June decision by the Greek government to impose a series of strict controls on the free flow of money, with a paltry 60-euro (\$66) a day limit on daily withdrawals from ATMs. Though banks reopened this week for the first time in more than three weeks, the ATM withdrawal limit is unchanged and cash is becoming scarce.

For an economy where cash payments are the norm, that's a huge problem.

Prasinoudis' wife and 11-year-old daughter have already moved to Germany — ironically the country blamed for many of the economic and social problems afflicting Greece. On Wednesday, the repairman sat drinking coffee on the sidewalk outside his repair shop, reflecting bitterly on his fate. "I hope my daughter learns German and doesn't come back," he said. "Not even for a holiday." Hardware store owner Costas Kitsos says sales have plummeted since capital controls were imposed on June 29.

"People come into the shop but they ask about the prices and don't buy

anything," he said. "Everyone is scared to spend money because they don't know what will happen"

Locked out of international bond markets in the spring of 2010, the country has relied on foreign rescue money to pay its debts — on condition that tough austerity measures, such as cuts to spending and increases in taxes were imposed.

The cost has been huge. A million jobs, mostly in the private sector, have been lost since then — around a fifth of the country's workforce.

But after appearing to stabilize last year, the Greek economy has faltered again even as unemployment remains high. At last count, unemployment was still over 25 percent and more than 50 percent for the under-25s.

Alongside the capital controls, the government imposed a new round of austerity, raising sales taxes and levies on businesses, while maintaining emergency taxes on households that have eaten up disposable incomes. Early Thursday, parliament approved a second round of measures demanded by rescue creditors for a new bailout. Retail associations fear a return to the peak levels of unemployment around 2012 when they were hit by a surge of business failures. □

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France:

Farmers block roads over low meat, milk prices

SYLVIE CORBET
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Angry French farmers relented Thursday after a day of protesting low milk and meat prices by blocking roads to Mont Saint-Michel and the Alps — but warned that other agricultural protests are on the horizon.

The farmers used tires, tractors and tree trunks to block roads all around the country a day before many French take to the roads to start their summer vacations.

Mont Saint-Michel, in the

northwestern Normandy region, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Tourists were forced to park their cars along the road and walk for several kilometers (miles) to the famous island.

The farmers blocked three major highways for eight hours around the eastern city of Lyon, a gateway to the Alps and the south of France. Traffic backed up 25 kilometers (15 miles) by mid-day.

Some roads in western France, a region with many milk and pork farms, were also jammed.

Farmers say their profits are being chipped away by cheap imports and pressure from grocery chains. Low prices have put about 10 percent of France's livestock farms on the verge of bankruptcy, according to the government.

Farmers were angry after the French government offered to back loans for farmers and delay tax payments as part of a 600 million-euro (\$654 million) agricultural plan but it did not give any direct financial aid in order not to break EU market rules. □



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10 former Chilean soldiers charged in Victor Jara killing

LUIS HENAO
Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — A judge has charged 10 former soldiers in the killing of internationally renowned Chilean folk singer and political activist Victor Jara, who was tortured and shot to death just days after the country's 1973 coup.

The charges announced late Wednesday by Judge Miguel Vazquez include homicide and kidnapping in the slaying of Jara and former military police head Litre Quiroga Carvajal.

Jara was a popular songwriter, theater director and university professor at the time of the coup on Sept. 11, 1973. He also was a member of the Communist Party, and many believe he could have served as a powerful voice against the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

A key leader of the New Chilean Song movement, Jara was familiar to young people worldwide in the late 1960s and early 1970s for songs including "Te Recuerdo Amanda," or "I'll Remember You Amanda," and "Manifiesto."

But he was dragged down to the basement of an indoor stadium in Santiago that had been converted into a detention and torture center where some 5,000 supporters of socialist President Salvador Allende were being held. Jara was tortured before he was shot 44 times on Sept. 16 as a warning to those who challenged Pinochet's authority.

Local residents later found the bodies of Jara and Quiroga Carvajal, who was shot 23 times, in a vacant lot near Santiago's Metropolitan Cemetery, according to court documents. □

Mexico:

At narco cemetery, graves await the inevitable



One of the many oversized luxury crypts stands inside the Jardines de Humaya cemetery, known for its palatial tombs built for deceased drug traffickers, in Culiacan, Mexico. Some of these crypts have air-conditioning, satellite TV and bathrooms. (AP Photo/Fernando Brito)

CULIACAN, Mexico (AP) — Palatial tombs mark the final resting spots of top narcotics traffickers in the Jardines de Humaya cemetery in the Sinaloa state capital of Culiacan.

The cemetery is known for the extravagant tombs built for deceased drug lords like Ignacio Coronel and Arturo Beltran Leyva.

Drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman hails from this region and there had been fears he would seek revenge against those who turned against him while he was in prison. But his escape doesn't seem to have sparked additional violence in this area, apparently with few new burials here in the nearly two

weeks since he slipped out of Mexico's highest-security prison.

Workmen on Wednesday were laying bricks and pouring concrete on one sleek, two-story modern-style crypt. Such tombs are sometimes built in advance, according to those familiar with the cemetery's patrons.

In front of the cemetery's gates, municipal police set up a check point and searched cars. But it wasn't to look for Guzman; it was to check for traffic infractions and stolen vehicles.

Top drug cartel lieutenants sometimes buy dozens of burial plots in advance at the Jardines de Humaya, to make sure there is space for their people when they meet their end. But many of the top drug lords' tombs have space that could hold dozens of graves. Some are outfitted with air conditioning, alarm systems — even living rooms with furniture. Many are decorated with sculptures or paintings of saints, Jesus or the Virgin of Guadalupe, despite their violent lifestyles.

Juan Carlos Ayala, a professor at the state University of Sinaloa who studies the philosophy of the narco culture, said the drug traffickers' lives are often "ephemeral," with ten or 15 years at the trade, at most. □

Venezuela opposition to run under single name

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's opposition coalition announced Wednesday that it will list candidates on a single ballot card in parliamentary elections, signaling a commitment to unity.

The Dec. 6 election is the opposition's best chance in years to win a legislative majority against the ruling socialist party.

Opposition coalition spokesman Jesus Torrealba said late Wednesday that the 29-party coalition would pursue a single strategy and run all candidates together on the

same ballot card. Coalition leaders are counting on the dissatisfaction that sent young people into the streets in 2014 to help them win at the polls. They hope to mount a recall against President Nicolas Maduro, but interparty squabbling has sometimes handicapped that effort.

The deepest fault lines run between hardliners who support massive street protests and frequently call on President Nicolas Maduro to resign, and more moderate leaders who favor a focus on gradual electoral change.

Hardline leaders called the sometimes bloody street protests in 2014 that sought unsuccessfully to force Maduro from office. Others coalition members called the protests a bad idea.

The divisions were recently on display when some opposition leaders supported a street protest, but the coalition as a whole did not. Some opposition members also disagreed about whether to hold open primaries for the Dec. 6 elections, or pre-select candidates. The coalition ultimately opted to pre-select most candi-

dates, but also hold some primary contests.

The government in recent days has disqualified several opposition candidates from holding office, without saying why.

On Thursday, Torrealba said on his Twitter account that the moves against government critics were reason to fight and unify behind the coalition's candidates.

Also on Thursday, Venezuelan food officials rolled back an order that would have forced private companies to distribute food staples to a network of state-run supermarkets. □

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Volcano called Kick 'em Jenny rumbling off Grenada

LINDA STRAKER
DAVID McFADDEN
Associated Press
ST. GEORGE'S, Grenada (AP) — An active underwater volcano off Grenada's northern coast called Kick 'em Jenny was rumbling Thursday and regional disaster authorities were put on alert even as they said it posed no threat of trigger-

ing a destructive tsunami. Since its discovery in the 1930s, Kick 'em Jenny has erupted beneath the surface of the Caribbean Sea at least 12 times, most recently in 2001. The underwater volcano, which rises some 1,300 meters (4,265 feet) above the seafloor on a steep slope of the Lesser Antilles ridge,

hasn't caused any deaths or injuries. The Seismic Research Center at the University of the West Indies said seismic activity had increased at the submerged volcano, which is just 8 kilometers (5 miles) north of Grenada. Recreational divers have reported seeing some "degassing" on the seafloor off

Grenada's west coast as gas-rich magma bubbles. Center researchers put the alert level at "orange," which means an eruption could take place within 24 hours. An eruption would stir up high waves and heat surrounding waters to boiling temperatures. Scientists say the volcano can also shoot hot rocks up through

the water column. Under the alert, all boats must stay at least 5 kilometers (3 miles) from the volcano. Kick 'em Jenny poses the greatest threat to mariners since the gases it releases can lower the density of the water so significantly vessels can lose buoyancy and sink. □

Puerto Rico power company rejects bondholders' plan

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico's power company on Thursday rejected a new proposal from bondholders that calls for an \$8.1 billion debt exchange amid growing concerns the public agency could be the first one in the U.S. territory to go bankrupt. The Electric Power Authority said the proposal would not lead to a successful restructuring and does not share the burden of its more than \$9 billion debt. "It imposes disproportionate risks on ratepayers and other creditors," the company said in a statement. "In addition to being unachievable, it is not supported by other creditor constituencies such as the bond insurers or the revol-



A protestor holds a sign that reads in Spanish: "We didn't take out a loan. We didn't see a dime. We're not going to pay." during a protest in the financial district in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico's power company on Thursday rejected a new proposal from bondholders that calls for an \$8.1 billion debt exchange. (AP Photo/Ricardo Arduengo)

ving fuel line lenders." The negotiations between the power company and the bondholders group comes nearly two months after the agency submit-

ted a long-awaited restructuring plan that calls for a minimum investment of \$2.3 billion and a revision of rate structures, among other things. The full plan has

not been publicly released. At the time, the Los Angeles-based investment bank Houlihan Lokey, an adviser to bondholders, said parts of the plan were positive but that others were unworkable and needed further negotiation. The group represents 40 percent of bondholders, which overall own \$8 billion of the power company's debt. In its new counterproposal, the bondholders group states that privatizing generation could lower rates as it proposed delaying debt payments for \$2.5 billion in savings it said could be invested elsewhere by the power company. "These savings would fund billions in capital investment for (the power company) without the need

for external financing with consumers directly benefiting from this approach by way of lower, more stable rates and a more modern and reliable utility," said Stephen Spencer, a managing director at Houlihan Lokey. Power bills in Puerto Rico are on average twice that in the U.S. mainland given the government's heavy reliance on petroleum. While Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla has said he supports privatizing power production and has pushed to find alternate energy sources, Lisa Donahue, the power company's chief restructuring officer, has said Puerto Ricans will see some sort of rate increase regardless of what type of final plan is approved. □

Paulson company to buy Puerto Rico hotel in \$20M deal

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — A company of New York hedge fund billionaire John Paulson reached a \$20 million deal to buy and renovate a recently closed hotel in Puerto Rico's tourist district, officials said Thursday. Paulson & Co. will develop the San Juan Beach Hotel into an ultra-luxury boutique hotel in the popular

Condado neighborhood, according to Puerto Rico's Department of Commerce and Economic Development. The seaside hotel previously filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy amid the U.S. territory's worsening economic crisis. Government officials said Paulson & Co.'s investments on the island could

reach \$2 billion by year's end. The company already owns the Vanderbilt Hotel and La Concha Resort in Condado, as well as the St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort in the northeast municipality of Rio Grande. "Paulson's continued investment in Puerto Rico is a testament to my administration's efforts to generate economic growth," Gov.

Alejandro Garcia Padilla said in a statement. "Our economic development plan is working." The investment is a boost for an island entering its ninth year in recession and struggling with \$72 billion in public debt. Government officials also announced that private equity firm Leon, Mayer & Co. is buying El San Juan

Resort & Casino in Isla Verde for \$71 million along with partners Fundamental Advisors LP and Aimbridge Hospitality. They said the resort will remain a Hilton brand and will see a \$35 million renovation. The announcements come a day after the Condado Plaza Hilton closed its casino after 40 years of operation. □



Manchebo Beach Resort Celebrates Summer With Local Cuisine!

EAGLE BEACH -- Every Saturday during the upcoming summer months the focus at the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa, is on local food. The two charming resort restaurants, Ike's Bistro and the French Steakhouse, have recently introduced two different local menus, highlighting the island's culinary heritage, and its unique flavoring.

Executive chef Ever de Pena, at the helm of the resort's culinary brigade, reports the dishes featured in the menus rely heavily on the abundance of locally caught fresh fish, tropical fruits and herbs, also highlighting the island's Dutch heritage. The novel presentation, fusing different tastes and textures, reflect the chef's own personal version of the popular, age-old recipes.

The French Steakhouse local menu features Keshi Yena, delectable baked stuffed cheese with chicken, capers, celery, carrots, green olives, onions and raisins served with polenta and plantain or equally enticing Keri Keri Fish Cakes, served on mixed greens with Pica di Papaya tartar sauce. Pica di Papaya, the local hot sauce made with Scotch Bonnet peppers and sweet papaya is a sure way to jumpstart a hearty appetite among locals.

Both recipes are traditional Aruba favorites, and have starred in every grandmother's kitchen in past decades. "It is our pleasure to bring these back into the limelight," says Chef de Pena, "These two recipes are some of our most treasured."

The menu continues with a Grilled Filet Mignon and Chicken duo served with pumpkin puree, seasonal vegetables and chimichuri sauce, or another irresistible choice, Catch of the Day, served the island way, with plantain, fried funchi,

Creole rice and Creole sauce. "Nothing can more Aruban than this," Chef de Pena, declares. The experience concludes with an ageless hit, Quesillo, an Aruban caramel flan with vanilla ice cream and sea-

magical place where the Mediterranean meets the Caribbean, the local menu every Saturday features a Fish Soup & Pica di Papaya as appetizer. The soup is served with pan bati, cilantro and plantain chips.

combo of filet mignon and black Tiger shrimp served with mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetables and rosemary sauce; or Red Snapper & Funchi, pairing pan seared fresh fish and fried funchi, sweet pea and

Boyo and cinnamon ice cream, presents a fragrant and warm bread pudding, layered with sweet strawberry salsa, chocolate tuile and strawberry powder. The restaurant underwent a recent US\$350,000 re-do,



sonal berries. The talented French Steakhouse pianist, Eddy Samson, provides live music through dinner.

At Ike's bistro, a restaurant introduced at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa in 2012, with a unique mission to offer guests flavors from the

Diners may also pick the second appetizer Potato Croquettes on a Mesclun salad, with mango, drizzled with sweet mustard vinaigrette.

Chef de Pena's selection of main courses is equally tempting, Land & Sea, a

basil puree, sweet banana salsa and Creole sauce. A third option, Pasta Carbonara, delivers grilled Shrimp on a bed of homemade linguini, and Carbonara sauce flavored with the local basil. The dessert, a sumptuous duo of Pan

and boasts a brand new bar and lounge area, with live entertainment.

About chef de Pena: Just 29 years of age, the chef has nevertheless been cooking for many years. Born and raised in Aruba he entered the apprenticeship program at the local vocational high school at the age of 15, and for five years combined school and hands-on training, in some of Aruba's finest restaurants under the watchful eye of the island's top chefs. While the first dish he ever prepared as a young man was Pasta Primavera, he today deftly composes beautiful dishes with subtle and complex flavors, under-promising and over-delivering, on taste and on presentation, each time!

Hurry up and make your reservation by calling the French Steakhouse and Ike's Bistro at tel.: 582-3444, or e-mail: steakhouse@manchebo.com. □

In its 6th Year on the Island; RBC Royal Bank's Art Rules Aruba, Master Edition, Is in Full Swing!



ORANJESTAD - Aruba's #1 Arts program, Art Rules Aruba, is back for another 2 weeks. Having opened on July 20th 2015, Art Rules

etveld Art Academy. Art Rules Aruba has provided arts education for over 600 kids since its beginnings in 2010, with the help of



Aruba is "the" platform for artistic Aruban teens, exploring and developing their artistic talents during the summer vacation. The art workshops, in 7 Art Disciplines including; Creative Writing, Creative Media, Dance, Theater, Music & Performance, DJ and Culinary Arts, are unfolding on Wilhelminastraat at the Ri-

RBC bank and other generous local businesses. Art Rules Aruba made it possible to invest in youth development, and also motivated and supported hundreds of Aruban teens, in their pursuit of excellence. Art Rules Aruba has currently more that 50 alumni's studying arts abroad. Founders Ira and Ayra Kip

are truly excited that their vision for an Educational Arts platform is growing and they are excited to have been able to offer Art Rules Aruba here, and for the past two years also on the neighboring island of Curaçao where "Art Rules Curaçao," has just concluded last week. This year's "Master Edition"

recruited a team of Master Educators from abroad, coming here to teach local students, some famous in their respective field, such as Creative Writing Teacher Lemon Andersen, who is an Emmy Award winner and New York Times 2010 writer Playwright, Director, Poet and Performer. He is also known for his perfor-

mances on Russell Simmons' Def Poetry Jam. Another well-known and highly experienced educator is DJ teacher Young Guru. Known as one of the worlds' most famous audio engineers and record Producers, Young Guru is the #1 engineer and DJ for rap mogul Jay Z and producer of Beyonce. YG is an expert in sound and the creation of music, which he will share with his students on the island. Also extending the program globally in this Master Edition is South African Theater practitioner, activist and performer, Thokozani Ndaba. Miss Ndaba is a former Ford Foundation Fellowship recipient, who completed her Masters Degree at New York's NYU's Steinhardt Educational Theatre.



Continued on Next Page

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Art Rules

Continued from Page 14

She is currently based in Johannesburg. "The program selected the most ambitious and most passionate applicants who truly wanted to continue their education and career in the arts," says founder Ayra Kip, about this year's students.

Art Rules Aruba runs from July 20th to July 31st with a big final showcase on Saturday August 1st.

For information on the rest of the team, updates, news and more, visit www.artrules.org facebook.com/artrulesaruba Twitter @artrulesU Instagram@artrulesflicks Art Rules would like to thank all its participating partners including, De Palm Tours, Hertz Car Rental, Aruba Timeshare Association, DIGICEL, Aruba Wine & Dine, Marketing Plus NV, The Caribbean Queen's Tikkun Olam program, Aruba Marriot Resort & Stellaris Casino, La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino, Para-

dise Beach Villa's, Aaron Croes, Swing Masterz and its scholarship partners Kiwanis of Palm Beach and Curoil, offering several Art Rules Scholarships for participation.

The culinary arts program has recruited some of the island's top chefs who are sharing their valuable time and knowledge with students. Chef Miguel Garcia, of the Aruba Marriott Resort teaches the History of Culinary Arts; Chef Ervin Husken, of Screaming Ea-



gle Restaurant presents the Ice cream making, covering both ice creams and

sorbets; Chef Matt Boland, of Divi Resorts discusses healthy Cooking Principals and helps kids make their most common every days dishes, super healthy! Chef Urvin Croes of the Kitchen Table and White Modern Cuisine introduces Vegetarian and Vegan Cooking Principals; Chef Stephen Toevs of the Ritz Carlton Aruba demonstrates Fish & Meat Butchery and the basics skills necessary to tackle beef and seafood, while Chef Dora Wang of the Ritz Carlton elaborates on Pastry Baking and Pastry Principals. Pictured here some of the goings on at the school this week! □



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EAGLE BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of very nice families as Distinguished Visitors and Goodwill Ambassadors at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, La Cabana Beach Resort and Occidental Beach Resort! The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 and 20-to-34 consecutive years.

The happy honorees were Dennis and Julie Wong, Anita and Richard Pennecke, Wanda and Bruce Gill, Thomas and Concetta Wharton, Nancy Obremski, Jean Scopicchio and Gary Sherwood, and Susan Asher.

These loyal visitors all love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, relaxation and being on Aruba is like being in paradise for them. The certificates were presented by Mr. Jonathan Boekhoudt representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with the guests' families and representatives from their host resorts! □





Bolt 'will show up' at world championships in Beijing

JACK BEZANTS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Even though Usain Bolt is still waiting to see if he has fully recovered from a left leg injury, the Olympic champion is sure he will be able to compete at next month's world championships in Beijing. Bolt withdrew from Diamond League meets in Lausanne in June and Paris this month because of his injury, but the Jamaican is scheduled to run in the 100 meters on Friday in London at the Olympic Stadium.

"I won't know until tomorrow," Bolt said Thursday about his fitness level. "We have been training good, I have been really working hard. It is all about getting the right execution.

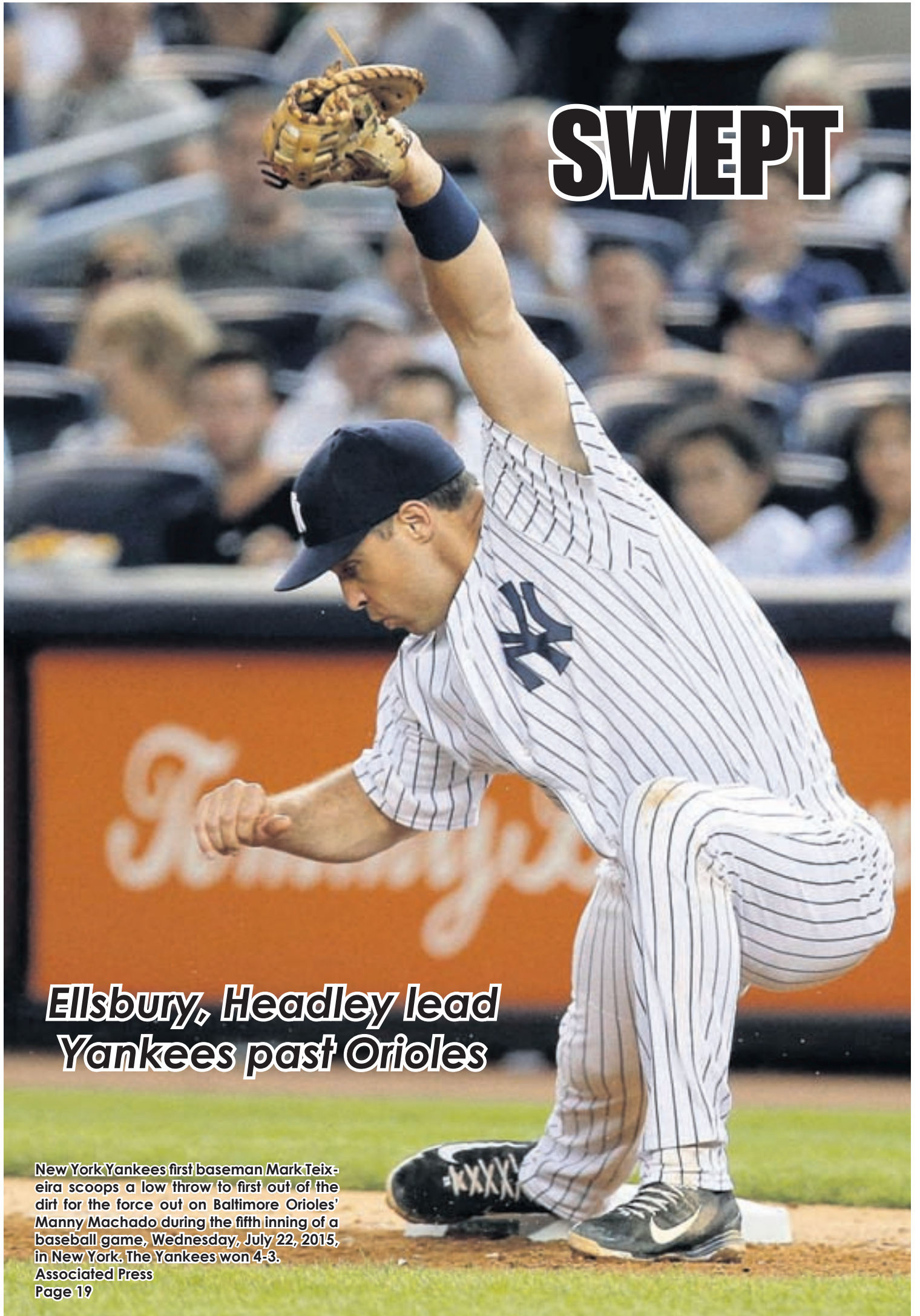
"When the championship comes, if anyone knows anything about me, I will show up."

The 28-year-old Bolt has not competed since running the 200 in New York last month, but he said being in Beijing is his goal and he will depend on coach Glen Mills to get him there.

"I'm never worried because he always finds a way to get me ready for championships," Bolt said. "All we have to do is just work. I need to work on my start. I think the last part of my race, it always comes together. This is what we have been focusing on."

Bolt won the 100 and 200 at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, both in record times.

Continued on page 22



Ellsbury, Headley lead Yankees past Orioles

New York Yankees first baseman Mark Teixeira scoops a low throw to first out of the dirt for the force out on Baltimore Orioles' Manny Machado during the fifth inning of a baseball game, Wednesday, July 22, 2015, in New York. The Yankees won 4-3.

Associated Press
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Salas, Kirk, Carter share Meijer LPGA Classic lead

BELMONT, Mich. (AP) — Lizette Salas built on her strong finish two weeks ago in the U.S. Women's Open in the first round of the Meijer LPGA Classic.

The 26-year-old former Southern California player shot a bogey-free 7-under 64 on Thursday at Blythe-field Country Club for a share of the first-round lead with Katherine Kirk and Dori Carter.

In the Women's Open in Pennsylvania, Salas finished with a 68 at difficult Lancaster to tie for 14th — her best finish since tying for 11th on Phoenix in March.

"My finish at the (U.S. Women's Open) kind of gave me that extra boost of confidence to really go low and that's what I did today," Salas said.

Salas eagled the 478-yard, par-5 11th, hitting a 3-wood approach to 10 feet.

"I hit every green and didn't three-putt, few mistakes, well, basically zero mistakes today," Salas said. "Hopefully, I didn't just jinx myself. I'm just going to stay positive and just keep confident this whole week."

She played the back nine in 5-under 30, closing with a 25-foot birdie putt on the par-4 18th.

"The rough is pretty gnarly, but I kept the ball in the fairway," Salas said. "The eagle on 11 got me going and really helped me target the pins. I stayed aggressive with my putting and it is really coming along."

She won the 2014 Kingsmill



Lizette Salas drives on the 16th hole during the first round of the Meijer LPGA Classic golf tournament at Blythe-field Country Club, Thursday, July 23, 2015, in Belmont, Mich.

Championship for her lone tour title.

Jaye Marie Green and rookie Wei-Ling Hsu were a shot back in the second-year tournament.

Michigan-born Kris Tamulis was at 66 along with Q Baek, Ilhee Lee and Jane Rah.

Top-ranked Inbee Park, who lost to Miram Lee in a playoff last year, had three front-nine bogeys in a 70. Chella Choi, the Marathon Classic winner Sunday in Sylvania, Ohio, opened

with a 71.

Salas, Kirk, Carter and Green played in the morning in little wind and perfect scoring conditions. Hsu had the best round in the afternoon after the wind kicked up. Park and Choi also played in the afternoon.

Kirk, a two-time tour winner, had her best round of the year. The Australian had two bogeys, but made seven birdies and also had an eagle on 11 after reaching the green in two.

"We had perfect condi-

tions this morning, hardly any wind and then greens were very receptive early on," she said. "I'm really happy. I haven't posted a round like that in a while so it feels good to finally get the rust off and shoot a low one."

Carter, winless on the tour, tied her career best with the 64. She had three straight birdies in a front-nine 5-under 31 and said on-going work with Gail Peterson is paying off.

"We've put a lot of work in,

even here this week, and today the putts finally fell," Carter said. "You know, I'm comfortable. I'm getting more experience and I like being here."

I want to continue to stay on the top of the leaderboard. The more I can get this experience, the better."

Miram Lee withdrew after the pro-am Wednesday, citing a left wrist injury that she said will also keep her out of the Women's British Open next week. □

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AL Capsules

Ellsbury, Headley lead Yankees to sweep of Orioles

NEW YORK (AP) — Jacoby Ellsbury finished a triple short of the cycle and drove in four runs, and Chase Headley hit a three-run double in the first inning as the New York Yankees completed a three-game sweep of the Baltimore Orioles 9-3 Thursday to bolster their spot atop the AL East.

Masahiro Tanaka (7-3) won his third straight start, allowing three solo homers and a double in 7 2-3 innings to help New York to its ninth win in 11 games.

The Yankees are 12 over .500 at 53-41 for the first time since May 25, 2013, their high point that season. Ellsbury homered, had a sacrifice fly and a two-run double among three hits. With a chance at the cycle, he grounded back to the pitcher in the eighth. Didi Gregorius followed Headley's bases-clearing hit with an RBI single off Ubaldo Jimenez as New York increased their major league-leading total of first-

inning runs to 86.

TWINS 3, ANGELS 0

ANAHEIM, California (AP) — Ervin Santana allowed four hits over eight innings against his former team as Minnesota ended both its four-game losing streak and Los Angeles' seven-game winning streak.

Trevor Plouffe hit a three-run homer in the fourth inning for the Twins, who wrapped their six-game California road trip with bookend wins.

Santana (2-0) was outstanding in his fourth start for Minnesota after throwing 7 2-3 scoreless innings in Oakland last week. He spent his first eight major league seasons with the Angels, winning 96 games from 2005-12.

Garrett Richards (10-7) yielded four hits over eight innings in his second loss in three starts. The Angels had won 13 of 15 and 17 of 20 while climbing atop the AL West.

MARINERS 3, TIGERS 2, 12 INNINGS



New York Yankees' Chase Headley watches his first-inning, three-run double in a baseball game against the Baltimore Orioles at Yankee Stadium in New York, Thursday, July 23, 2015.

Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Mike Zunino's RBI double in the top of the 12th inning gave Seattle a win over Detroit. Chris Taylor started the 12th with a single off Ian Krol (1-3), and Zunino tried to

bunt him to second. After two failed attempts, Zunino doubled down the left-field line. Yoenis Cespedes misread the bounce off the fence, allowing Taylor to score the go-ahead run.

Tom Wilhelmsen pitched the bottom of the 12th for his first save of the season after Fernando Rodney (3-4) threw a scoreless 11th. Neither starter was involved in the decision. □

NL Capsules

Taylor, Espinosa lead Nationals' comeback over Mets

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Taylor had a tying two-out, two-run single in the eighth inning, Danny Espinosa followed with an RBI double and the Washington Nationals rallied from three runs down to beat the New York Mets 4-3 on Wednesday. In danger of having their lead over the Mets in the NL East cut to one game, Taylor drove in the Nationals' first run in the fourth with a single off Noah Syndergaard to make it 3-1. After a wild pitch from



Bobby Parnell (1-1) put runners on second and third in the eighth, Taylor ripped a

full-count fastball to left to tie it. Taylor then stole second base before Espinosa

put Washington in position to take two of three from the Mets and open a three-game lead in the division. Drew Storen struck out the side in the ninth for his 29th save. Matt Thornton (1-0) pitched the eighth for the win.

MARLINS 5, DIAMONDBACKS 3

PHOENIX (AP) — Jose Fernandez struck out 11 in seven innings, A.J. Ramos struck out three straight with the bases loaded in the ninth and Miami held off Arizona.

Fernandez (3-0) was sharp in his fourth start since returning from Tommy John surgery, allowing three runs on five hits for rare road win. The right-hander also had second RBI of the season, following J.T. Realmuto's run-scoring double with one of his own in Miami's three-run first inning off Robbie Ray (3-5).

Aaron Hill led off the ninth with a walk off Ramos, and Ender Inciarte and pinch hitter Wellington Castillo followed with singles to load the bases. □

U.S. ponders a shocking loss; Mexico advances with ugly win

PAUL NEWBERRY

AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — After the feel-good summer of 2014, the United States was eager to pick up another Gold Cup title and lock up its spot in the next Confederations Cup.

Instead, the Americans are dealing with one of their most shocking losses.

Giving up two first-half goals on set plays, one delivered by goalkeeper Brad Guzan's blunder on a routine throw, the U.S. fell to Jamaica 2-1 in the Gold Cup semifinals Wednesday night.

Forget another CONCACAF title.

That will go to either Mexico or Jamaica, who meet in Sunday's final at Philadelphia.

As for the Americans, it's time to figure out what went wrong after the first home loss to a Caribbean nation since a 1969 defeat to Haiti. They also face a playoff with this year's Gold Cup winner for the North and Central American and Caribbean berth in the 2017 Confederations Cup.

"We have no choice but to move ourselves forward," captain Michael Bradley said. "It's disappointing right now. That's normal."

A year ago, the American men reached the knockout round of the World Cup before losing to Belgium in extra time, giving the world's most popular game a bit more of a foothold in a country still dominated by football, baseball and basketball. Throw in this month's victory in the Women's World Cup, and U.S. soccer was really on a roll.

Well, before more than 70,000 in the sold-out Geor-



Jamaica's Michael Seaton, Rudolph Austin, Giles Barnes and Joel McAnuff, from left, celebrate after Jamaica defeated the United States 2-1 in a CONCACAF Gold Cup soccer semifinal Wednesday, July 22, 2015, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

gia Dome, the Americans were tripped up by an island nation of some 2.9 million — roughly half the population of metro Atlanta.

"The feeling right now is insane," said Giles Barnes, after scoring one of Jamaica's goals off a free kick. Barnes' goal from 18 yards, a hooking blast that sailed over the American wall in the 36th minute, wouldn't have been possible if not for Guzan extending his right arm — and the ball — across the penalty line while making a throw.

"I was running down the field when I heard we had a free kick," said Barnes, who plays in Major League Soccer with Houston Dynamo. "I didn't know what was happening there."

The 34th-ranked Americans were stunned by the ruling. "It's a call you don't see very often," Bradley said.

"It's a call I wouldn't be making if I was a referee. But I'm not a referee."

Talk about disputed calls. Mexico rallied for a 2-1 victory over Panama on two late penalty kicks by Andres Guardado — one in stoppage time, the other in extra time.

After Roman Torres headed one in off a corner early in the second half, Panama nearly pulled off the second upset of the night, despite playing a man down most of the game. Luis Tejada was sent off with a red card after a hard tackle in the 25th minute.

When American referee Mark Geiger signaled a penalty kick for Mexico with the clock winding down in the second half, ruling Torres touched the ball with his hand in front of the goal while falling to the turf contesting a loose ball, the

Panamanians erupted in protest. As fans showered the field with cups and trash, the two teams nearly came to blows between their benches. The match was halted for nearly 15 minutes before Guardado finally converted the penalty. Mexico won it after Geiger awarded another kick for Harold Cummings' takedown of Javier Orozco in the penalty area, setting up Guardado's winning goal in the 105th. The weary Panamanians couldn't come back from that, but they did muster the energy to go after Geiger at the final whistle. Security officers raced onto the field to escort the referee and his crew to the safety of the locker room.

"I ask myself why did this happen?" said Panama coach Hernan Gomez through a translator. "We were doing everything well. It is very sad. We are people of football, and I still can't believe this happened. I wonder if this really happened."

Panama will take on the U.S. in the third-place game Saturday.

The Jamaicans charged onto the field with pure joy at the end of their victory, while a small contingent of fans, clad in green and gold, saluted the Reggae Boyz. Ranked 76th in the world, they became the first Caribbean nation to reach a Gold Cup final — a sporting achievement that had nothing to do with Usain Bolt.

"My phone hasn't stopped," Barnes said. "Back in Jamaica, there's got to be a party going on. Everybody knows how we are."

Darren Mattocks of the Vancouver Whitecaps scored Jamaica's first goal on a 31st-minute header directly off a throw-in. Otherwise, the Americans largely dominated, finishing with a 10-3 edge in shots on goal — including eight in the second half, as they furiously pushed the attack.

Jamaican goalkeeper Ryan Thompson, who plays for the Pittsburgh Riverhounds in the third-tier United Soccer League, turned aside every shot but Bradley's goal in the 48th. Even then, Thompson stopped a couple of attempts before Bradley swooped in on the loose ball to finish.

The defending champion U.S., which had played in five straight Gold Cup finals, was eliminated for the first time by a CONCACAF team en route to the title game. In the era when teams outside the region were invited, the Americans lost semifinals to Brazil in 1996 and 2003, and a quarterfinal to Colombia in 2000.

"We had enough chances to put this game away," said U.S. coach Jurgen Klinsmann, insisting there was no reason to panic. "The luck was not with us." □

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Two stages down, two to go in Alps for Froome on Tour

JOHN LEICESTER
AP Sports Writer

SAINT-JEAN-DE-MAURIE-ENNE, France (AP) — The road snaked back and forth like spaghetti stuck to a wall, 18 hairpin bends, climbed for the first time in the 112-year history of the Tour de France.

Curiously, there were no crowds on this spectacular vista just perfect for the television age. Police decided that the three-kilometer (two-mile) stretch of bends piled one on top of each other up an Alpine cliff, was simply too narrow to let in spectators who line pretty much every other inch of cycling's toughest race.

Not that Chris Froome noticed on Thursday. The race leader isn't here for the picture-postcard scenery. Just two more days in the Alps, and a second Tour victory will be his. The British rider isn't about to get distracted and take his eyes off the road now.

"I didn't actually even realize there weren't any spectators up there," Froome said. "I was just in a tunnel mode at that point, just following the wheels."

After Stage 18, Team Sky's leader really has only two

wheels to follow: Nairo Quintana's and Alejandro Valverde's, the Movistar teammates closest to him in the overall standings.

As long as he doesn't let either of them get too far away from him on Friday and Saturday, then Froome will be sipping champagne and slipping back into the yellow jersey on Stage 21 on Sunday, on the Champs-Elysees in Paris.

"Two more stages left of real racing," he said. "We're focused on two guys."

Romain Bardet, on the other hand, was focused on himself. France hasn't had a Tour winner since Bernard Hinault in 1985, and there are some that think 24-year-old Bardet could be next after his sixth place last year. But he's not been consistent enough to improve on that this time, so he wanted to at least win a stage.

He did. In style.

Bardet rode alone down the huge Glandon pass and up the hairpin bends of the Montvernier Laces to take a solo victory at Saint-Jean-De-Maurienne on the second of four days in the Alps. Pierre Rolland of the Europcar team made it a



Romain Bardet of France celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 161 kilometers (100 miles) with start in Digne-les-Bains and finish in Pra Loup, France, Thursday, July 23, 2015.

Associated Press

1-2 French finish, coming in 33 seconds behind the winner for AG2R La Mondiale. As they did on the first Alpine stage on Wednesday, Froome's rivals again tested him but couldn't make him crack over seven climbs.

"Everyone attacked," Froome said.

Two-time champion Alberto Contador showed spirit, with a burst of speed on the 22-kilometer (14-mile) long climb up to the Glandon pass, but he couldn't claw back the minutes he lost on Wednesday in a downhill crash. "One of the hardest days for me," Contador

said. "I was in pain."

Froome, Contador, and other podium contenders finished together in a group of 10 riders who rode in three minutes behind the stage winner. Bardet remains too far down the overall standings — in 10th place, nearly 13 minutes behind Froome — to have realistic ambitions for the podium this year. But he is the highest-placed French rider so far.

Bardet rode away at the top of the punishing Glandon climb — the hardest Alpine ascent so far — and built a lead on the

long descent. He held it up the Montvernier Laces' spectacular switchbacks.

"A crazy stage," Bardet said. "I can't believe it." Without fans, the telegenic ascent was eerily quiet.

"Almost every kilometer (mile) of the race up until now you've had spectators all the way, and we had three kilometers there where there was no one," Froome said. "You can understand why ... the road really was quite narrow."

But a cheering crowd waiting for Bardet at the top gave him a burst of energy to the finish. □

U.S. defeats Japan 3-0 at FIVB Grand Prix Finals

STEVE BEIDECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Going with the friends and family game plan benefited the United States Wednesday night at the FIVB World Grand Prix Finals. Karsta Lowe and Kelsey Robinson combined for 22 kills to lead the Americans to a three-set victory over Japan.

The United States won 25-12, 25-15, 25-18 before a crowd of 5,105 at CenturyLink Center. The tournament continues through Sunday.

The Americans get precious few opportunities to play top-tier international

competitions on United States soil; the last one was the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Instead of letting the pressure of playing in front of so many familiar faces be a hindrance, U.S. head coach Karch Kiraly is making the most of this unique opportunity.

"We're embracing a rare chance for family and friends to cheer us on," Kiraly said. "We're building in some family time every day, but we also have a job to do."

The Americans did that job against Japan. Robinson, one of three former University of Nebraska players on the U.S. roster, got things

started for the Americans with six kills in the first set rout with a relatively young lineup.

"It was nice to be able to do that in front of friends and family," Robinson said. "This is what we've been starting with pretty much the whole tournament. It's a testament to how deep our bench is."

After falling behind by three in the second set, the U.S. flipped an 8-6 deficit into a 10-8 advantage and gradually pulled away. Lowe finished the second set with back-to-back kills to finish the first two sets with 11 kills. Foluke Akinradewo and Kimberly Hill both had six



U.S. players, including Kelsey Robinson (23), celebrate after winning a point in an FIVB World Grand Prix Finals volleyball match against Japan, in Omaha, Neb., Wednesday, July 22, 2015.

Associated Press

kills apiece, with Akinradewo getting several of hers late in the third set.

In Wednesday's first two matches, Brazil defeated China 23-25, 25-20, 25-16,

25-14 before Russia swept Italy 26-24, 28-26, 25-19.

On Thursday the United States plays Italy after Brazil faces Russia and Japan plays China. □

Phelps, other stars missing from swimming worlds in Russia

BETH HARRIS
AP Sports Writer

Michael Phelps isn't the only big name missing from the world swimming championships that begin Friday in Kazan, Russia.

Along with the 18-time Olympic gold medalist, Aussie sprinter James Magnussen, Yannick Agnel of France, South Korea's Park Tae-hwan and Kylie Palmer of Australia won't be competing in the last major international meet before the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. Also missing is Japanese star Kosuke Hagino and Swedish veteran Therese Alshammar.

The absences will likely set the stage for lesser-known talent to emerge a year before the Rio Games.

"By no means is it going to be a perfect representation of what the Olympics are going to be next year," U.S. sprinter Nathan Adrian said.

Phelps didn't swim at the 2013 worlds in Barcelona, having retired the previous year after the London Olympics. He qualified in three events a year ago for Kazan, but was banned from worlds as part of his punishment by USA Swimming for a second drunken driving arrest last fall.

While the rest of the world is tuning up for Rio, Phelps will be competing at the U.S. national championships in Texas at the same time.

Magnussen, the two-time defending 100-meter freestyle champion, is recovering from left shoulder surgery. Agnel, the defending 200 free champion, withdrew citing illness. Park



In this April 18, 2015, file photo, Michael Phelps looks to the scoreboard after competing in the men's 100 meter freestyle final at the Arena Pro Swim Series in Mesa, Ariz. Phelps finished first in the final.

is serving a doping suspension, while Palmer withdrew as the result of a positive drug test at the 2013 worlds. Hagino broke his right elbow recently, while Alshammar has a herniated disc.

Without Phelps, the U.S. men's team will be led by Ryan Lochte, who has a much lighter schedule than usual. He will swim just two individual events — 200 free and 200 individual medley — and possibly some relays.

"We have a bunch of veterans and a bunch of youth," Lochte said. "We're going to have our work cut out for us but we're Team USA. We can handle the job."

Unlike other countries, the U.S. comes into worlds without benefit of recent national championships or

trials meet. The squad was selected a year ago based on results at the Pan Pacific Championships.

"It's going to be a challenge for this group," U.S. men's coach Dave Durdan said. "We're going to have to create a little bit of a psychological edge. We haven't had our time to shine yet this year like a lot of other countries."

The U.S. men will be looking to avenge their disqualification in the 4x100 medley relay from two years ago, when Kevin Cordes dove in too early on the breast-stroke leg. Cordes is on the roster again.

Agnel's absence could cost France chances at winning medals in the 400 free and 400 medley relays. France won the 400 medley relay two years ago af-

ter the U.S. got disqualified. China's Sun Yang is set to swim in the 200, 400, 800 and 1,500 freestyles coming off his doping violation last year. He owns the world record in the 1,500, and is ranked in the top 10 in his other three events.

On the women's side, Katie Ledecky and Missy Franklin are the biggest stars of the U.S. team. Ledecky won four gold medals and set two world records at the 2013 worlds; Franklin earned a record six golds while swimming seven events.

Ledecky recently graduated from high school and is deferring college until after the Rio Games. Franklin recently turned professional after two years of college. "It's about trying to get faster," Ledecky said. "I'm

very motivated."

Katinka Hosszu of Hungary, nicknamed "Iron Lady" for her herculean schedule, is ranked in the world's top 10 in six different events, although she had not revealed her plans ahead of the meet.

The eight-day swimming competition runs Aug. 2-9 at Kazan Arena, a soccer stadium transformed by the addition of two temporary pools and a 12,000-seating capacity. Synchronized swimming, which opens the first week and is a sport long dominated by the Russians, will be held there, too.

American Bill May will be part of the mixed duet synchro competition, being held for the first time at worlds. Once banned from international meets because of his gender, May is making a comeback in the mixed event, where he will pair with a female teammate. Diving is featured the first week at the 3,600-seat Aquatics Palace, while water polo will be played at a new arena nearby.

China will make a run at sweeping the diving events after being the top nation throughout the recent World Series.

High diving returns after making its debut in Barcelona. Orlando Duque of Colombia and Cesilie Carlton of the U.S. are the defending champions. A year ago, Kazan was the site of the first World Cup event in the sport. The three-day event that opens the second week of the meet takes place on the banks of the Kazanka River near the Kazan Kremlin. □



Bolt

Continued from page 17

A year later, he broke both those records at the world championships in Berlin.

Bolt's main competitor in Beijing this year will be Justin Gatlin, a 33-year-old American who won the 100-meter gold medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics and has twice been banned for doping.

Gatlin ran a personal best 9.74 seconds in May and is considered a favorite for

the 100-meter world title on Aug. 23.

Bolt has yet to run under 10 seconds this year and was asked if it would be bad for the sport if he was beaten by Gatlin and lost his world record.

"I'm not planning to lose so can't answer that question," Bolt said. "I never worry about one person. For me, I'm not worried about times. Sometimes it takes getting to the big moment to get focused and get ready. I'm sure when I get

to the championships it will be a good run. As long as I am in great shape, it will be no worries."

Bolt said Mills could make him compete in more events before Beijing, depending on how he fares in London on Friday.

"He will see what happens tomorrow and it will determine if I need more meets," Bolt said. "It (victory in London) will definitely give me momentum and confidence going into the championship." □



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YouTube creators looking elsewhere for money

RYAN NAKASHIMA
AP Business Writer

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) —

When 29-year-old YouTube star Meghan Tonjes launched a podcast with crowd-funding site Patreon a year ago, it was one of dozens of things the singer-songwriter was doing to grind out a living online. Today, it's paying her rent.

Along with posting performance videos on YouTube, touring, selling songs on iTunes and "vlogging" (video blogging), Tonjes sits down twice a week with her roommate in Los Angeles to talk about "Adventures in Roommating." Nearly 100 online patrons donate a total of close to \$700 per podcast, just to listen and maybe get a shout-out.

Tonjes grew her audience on YouTube, where she has amassed more than 210,000 followers since 2006.

But collecting a check from her cut of YouTube ad revenue is no longer her main source of income.

"If YouTube disappeared tomorrow, I want to know that I can go play shows, do podcasts and live without being dependent on one site or one app," she says.

With YouTube taking about a 45 percent cut of ad revenue from videos posted on the site, YouTubers and companies that manage them are hunting for new ways to make money from the audiences they've built on the platform. That will be a big topic of conversation at VidCon, the annual convention in Anaheim, California, that kicked off Thursday.

Robert Kyncl, head of content and business operations at YouTube, welcomes the challenges to



In this Thursday, July 9, 2015 photo, Reza Izad, left, CEO of Collective Digital Studio, and chairman Michael Green pause for photos in Beverly Hills, Calif. YouTubers and companies that manage them are on the hunt for new ways to make money from the audiences they've built on the platform, which takes about a 45 percent cut of ad revenue. Associated Press

its online dominance, even if other platforms are enticing creators with better cuts of revenue.

Richer creators will "have more and better content to publish on YouTube," he says. "We don't live in a world that is mutually exclusive."

A panoply of ways to earn money outside of YouTube have recently emerged.

OTHER VIDEO SITES ARE PAYING

Facebook announced this month that in the fall it would start sharing ad revenue with a select few creators like the NBA, Fox Sports and Funny or Die. Video-game streaming service Twitch already shares subscription revenue from followers with top gamers, and a site called YouNow allows online fans to give tips to talent with coins bought with real money in live stream forums.

Vessel, a video service launched in January by former Hulu CEO Jason Kilar, offers creators 15 percentage points more ad

revenue share than YouTube, as well as 60 percent of the \$3 per month fee from subscribers who want days-early access to videos before they show up elsewhere.

Kilar says paying creators more helps them make higher-quality videos, the same way subscription revenues help premium pay channels like HBO finance better TV shows.

BRAND-SPONSORED VIDEO

Everything from "unboxing" videos of new gadgets and how-to videos that show off teeth-whitening products are providing YouTubers a solid revenue stream.

FameBit, a Santa Monica startup, launched a marketplace last year where creators bid on the right to make brand-sponsored videos, and deals close for, on average, \$500 per video, says Agnes Kozera, the company's co-founder and chief operating officer. Brands usually buy multiple videos in different genres, from reviews to

funny skits, to see what fits. Also launching this week is an app called Social Bluebook, which benchmarks how much creators should ask for such digital promos, including on platforms like Instagram and Twitter. It's based on existing deals and a creator's fan base and their level of engagement.

"We at least want you to have an educated estimate on what you should be charging," says Chad Sahley, the company's founder and CEO.

BOOKS, MOVIES, MERCHANDISE, DOWNLOADS

Two movies starring YouTube sensations are debuting around VidCon, including "SMOSH: The Movie," featuring comedy duo Ian Hecox and Anthony Padilla, and "The Chosen," a horror flick featuring vlogger Kian Lawley. With limited theatrical runs, both films are being made available online for \$10 on Friday.

They won't be the first feature films starring YouTubers

and they won't be the last, says Barry Blumberg, chief content officer for SMOSH backer Defy Media. Last year saw the success of similar films such as "Camp Takota," starring Grace Helbig, and "Expelled," starring Cameron Dallas.

"Everybody that has already made a movie in this space is anxious to make another one," Blumberg says.

FameBit is also venturing into paid content, launching a talk show series called "FilterFreeTV" that will sell on iTunes for \$1.99 per episode.

YouTube personality Kayla Lashae, 22, who has made a living for three years with videos about trying out bags and testing things like electric toothbrushes, says it's a good idea to branch out with the co-hosting gig. "My overall goal is take my brand outside of YouTube and move it directly to television," she says.

GOING INTERNATIONAL

Big multichannel networks, which help YouTube stars get advertising deals, are tying up and expanding their business abroad.

Last year Disney bought Maker Studios, and AT&T and Chernin Group purchased Fullscreen. And earlier this month, German broadcaster ProSiebenSat.1 merged its Studio71 with Collective Digital Studio, a Los Angeles-based network behind such brands as Epic Meal Time, Video Game High School and Just Kidding News.

Part of the rationale is to take formats that have worked in Germany, like the head-to-head video game challenge show, "Last Man Standing," and transport them to different markets with local talent, says CDS CEO Reza Izad. □

Comcast adds customers; box office pumps up revenue

TALI ARBEL
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Despite a slowdown in subscriber growth, the Internet is still propelling Comcast. The movies and theme parks in its NBCUniversal entertainment unit also bolstered results in the quarter. The country's largest cable company added 180,000 Internet customers in the April-June quarter, the smallest gain in at least two

years. That brings its total Internet subscribers to 22.6 million.

Comcast's Internet customers surpassed its cable customers in the second quarter for the first time ever, underscoring that the future of the industry is broadband. The company finished June down 69,000 TV customers, to 22.3 million.

Fears about a larger Comcast's dominance of the

high-speed Internet market led to the downfall in April of its deal to acquire Time Warner Cable.

Regulators worried Comcast could undermine online video competitors by controlling how they reached many customers. Comcast this month announced an Internet video service of its own — Stream — that will include broadcast channels and HBO for \$15 a month.

Stream has limitations. It's only for Comcast Internet customers and, unlike Dish Network's Sling TV, shows most live content only inside a customer's home network.

To watch anything outside your home you have to log in to an individual channel's app on a mobile device, the same as a cable TV customer can do, or use Stream's DVR service.

The company is launching

Stream as online TV options that don't require a cable subscription proliferate, while cable and satellite TV subscribers start to slip. Channels like Lifetime, Showtime, CBS and HBO have launched online video services. Sling TV gives you a "skinny bundle" of about 20 channels for \$20 a month. Verizon is working on a mobile TV service that's expected to launch this summer. □

Stocks fall for 3rd straight day as earnings disappoint



A pedestrian walks past the New York Stock Exchange. Disappointing earnings and outlooks from several big companies, including American Express, Caterpillar and 3M helped drag U.S. stocks lower for a third day in a row.

(AP Photo/Jin Lee)

ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

Investors have been second-guessing the strength of company results this week and they found more reasons to do so on Thursday.

Disappointing earnings

and outlooks from several big companies, including American Express, Caterpillar and 3M helped drag U.S. stocks lower for a third day in a row. The losing streak has nudged the Dow Jones industrial average into negative territory

for the year.

While companies have mostly reported better-than-anticipated profits since the start of the month, many have fallen short when it comes to revenue.

Others have issued cau-

tious outlooks, citing the strength of the dollar, a slowing economy in China or falling oil prices. That's giving investors reason to pause.

What investors need in order to push stocks higher again is "true revenue growth from the corporate sector, which we just haven't seen," said Randy Frederick, managing director of trading and derivatives at Charles Schwab & Co.

Amazon bucked the trend, jumping 15 percent in after-hours trading following better-than-expected earnings.

The Dow slid 119.12 points, or 0.7 percent, to 17,731.92. The average is now down 0.5 percent for the year.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index lost 12 points, or 0.6 percent, to 2,102.15. Utilities and materials stocks fell the most among the 10 industry groups on the index.

The Nasdaq composite declined 25.36 points, or 0.5 percent, to 5,146.41. The tech-focused index, which

hit a high on Monday, remains the best-performing index for the year. It's up 8.7 percent, compared with 2.1 percent for the S&P 500.

Bond prices rose as investors shifted money from stocks into bonds. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.27 percent.

A slide in the price of oil deepened on concerns that global crude supplies continue to outpace demand. U.S. crude is below \$50 a barrel.

American Express, Caterpillar and 3M all released weaker-than-expected results. American Express fell \$1.98, or 2.5 percent, to \$77.01. Caterpillar lost \$2.88, or 3.6 percent, to \$76.88, while 3M declined \$5.91, or 3.8 percent, to \$149.50.

Traders bid up shares in other companies that delivered strong results.

General Motors rose 4 percent after the automaker's second-quarter earnings handily beat financial analysts' forecasts. □

Union Pacific's 2Q profit falls 7 percent as volume declines

JOSH FUNK
AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A sharp decline in coal shipments drove down Union Pacific's second-quarter profit by 7 percent, and executives predicted that the railroad would fall short of expectations for the year because the challenging conditions will continue.

Its shares lost nearly 6 percent Thursday.

Faltering coal demand has

created challenges for all the major freight railroads and in April, natural gas overtook coal as the top source of U.S. electric power generation for the first time ever, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Union Pacific Corp. said coal volume dropped 26 percent in the second quarter, and demand for that fuel is likely to remain weak in the rest of the year. Overall shipping volume is

also likely to be down from last year's strong levels.

Chief Financial Officer Rob Knight said the railroad's efforts to increase prices and reduce costs won't be enough to generate profits higher than last year's \$5.75 per share.

Wall Street had been expecting Union Pacific to deliver earnings per share of \$5.79 per share in 2015, according to FactSet.

"While we continue to im-

prove, it is not likely at this point that we will achieve record earnings given this year's challenges," Knight said.

Union Pacific's shares fell \$5.56, or 5.7 percent, to close at \$92.12 Thursday.

Falling natural gas prices and the potential for more restrictions on the use of coal by environmental regulators have curtailed its use and that has weighed on railroads. Last week, ri-

val CSX Corp. said weak coal demand would slow profit growth this year.

Union Pacific reported net income of \$1.2 billion, or \$1.38 per share, for the second quarter. That's down from \$1.29 billion, or \$1.43 per share, a year ago.

The Omaha, Nebraska, railroad said that its revenue fell 10 percent to \$5.4 billion because its price increases couldn't offset the drop in volume. □

Wal-Mart buying remaining stake in China's Yihaodian

A. D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wal-Mart wants to make a bigger play for Chinese consumers online.

The world's largest retailer purchased the remaining stake it didn't own in China's Yihaodian, an online retailer. Wal-Mart is attempting to follow consumers as they migrate to the Internet in China, a country where the retailer has struggled to adjust to buying habits and local competition.

Financial terms were not disclosed.

Yihaodian, founded in 2008, sells more than 8 million products.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. previously held about 51 percent of Yihaodian. The company bought the remaining shares from financial services group Ping An of China and its co-founders, former Chairman Gang Yu and former CEO Junling Liu. The pair said this month they are leaving Yihaodian but will assist in the transition, with Yu serving as chairman emeritus and Liu as strategic executive adviser.

Wang Lu, president and CEO of Walmart Global eCommerce in Asia, will head Yihaodian as part of his overall responsibilities.

"We're excited about the team at Yihaodian and their strong local e-commerce experience," said Neil Ashe, president and CEO of Wal-Mart Global e-commerce in statement.

"This local experience, combined with Wal-Mart's global source and our strong retail presence and supply chain, will allow us to deliver low prices on the products customers need." The Bentonville, Arkansas, retailer, which opened its first store in China nearly 20 years ago, has struggled with slow and uneven growth but it's making the market a top priority. After rapid store expansion a few years ago, Wal-Mart is closing some stores and focusing on making its fleet of about 400 stores more profitable. □

General Motors tops 2Q forecasts on trucks, SUVs

AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Big profits from trucks and SUVs helped General Motors overcome a sales slowdown in China, economic problems in Venezuela and

GM distance itself from the recalls. Still, the company raised its estimate for what it will spend to compensate victims of crashes caused by defective ignition switches from \$600 mil-

per share, handily beating the \$1.08 average of seven analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research. Among the special items were \$720 million for currency devaluation and

industry's overall gain. But the company said its sales were highly profitable, with SUVs and pickup trucks bringing in more dollars per vehicle. Kelley Blue Book estimated GM's average U.S. selling price at \$37,025 for the quarter, up 3.3 percent from a year ago.

In China, GM introduced two new SUVs during the quarter, helping to boost sales, Stevens said. "Our SUV sales across the business are up more than 80 percent," he said. The company also cut costs and became more efficient in China, where it will continue to invest in new products despite slowing growth, he said.

So far this year, GM has spent \$2.1 billion buying back shares and has spent \$1.1 billion on dividends. Under pressure from activist investors, GM agreed to repurchase \$5 billion of shares by the end of 2016.

Overall, the company reported a 7.5 percent profit margin, the percentage of revenue it gets to keep. It expects to reach a 9- to 10-percent profit margin by early next decade.

The automaker posted revenue of \$38.18 billion in the quarter, missing Street forecasts. Four analysts surveyed by Zacks expected \$40.11 billion.

GM shares rose \$2.25 to \$32.55 in trading early Thursday. They have fallen 7 percent since the beginning of the year, while the Standard & Poor's 500 index has climbed roughly 3 percent. □



Employee Efen Martin II inspects a Cadillac Escalade as it nears the final process of assembly at the General Motors plant in Arlington, Texas. General Motors reported quarterly financial results on Thursday, July 23, 2015.

(AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez)

payments to ignition switch crash victims as the automaker's second-quarter net income rose sixfold to nearly \$1.12 billion.

The Detroit company made 67 cents per share from April through June compared with 11 cents a year ago. The year-earlier quarter included \$1.5 billion in expenses for a string of safety recalls. GM's \$2.8 billion pretax profit in North America was a second-quarter record.

The strong profits helped

lion to \$625 million. Chief Financial Officer Chuck Stevens called it a final estimate, although GM still faces multiple lawsuits and a potentially large penalty from a Justice Department criminal investigation.

GM also said Thursday that it expects pretax profits to be better in the second half than the first, when it made \$5 billion. Shares jumped more than 7 percent as the market opened.

Excluding \$1.1 billion in special items, GM made \$1.29

asset write-downs in Venezuela and \$75 million to compensate ignition switch crash victims.

Faulty ignition switches that can unexpectedly shut off engines in older GM small cars are responsible for at least 124 deaths and 269 injuries, according to a fund set up by the company to compensate victims.

GM's sales in China fell 1 percent during the quarter as the market slowed, and its sales increase of 1.9 percent in the U.S. trailed the

Mylan puts up barrier to Teva with Dutch legal maneuver

NEW YORK (AP) — Drug-maker Mylan on Thursday used a provision of Dutch law to put up a barrier that makes it harder for larger rival Teva Pharmaceutical Industries to buy the company.

Dutch companies like Mylan can create a foundation, or stichting, that has the option to buy stock in order to protect the interests of the company. Mylan took that step in April, and on Thursday the foundation took a 50-percent stake in

Mylan by buying 488.4 million preferred shares of its stock.

Both Mylan and Israel-based Teva are looking to consolidate in an increasingly competitive generic drug industry. Teva wants to get even bigger and combine its manufacturing and sales operations with Mylan's to save money. Mylan wants to combine its generic drugs with Perrigo Co.'s over-the-counter medicines, generic drugs, nutritional products and in-

fant formulas.

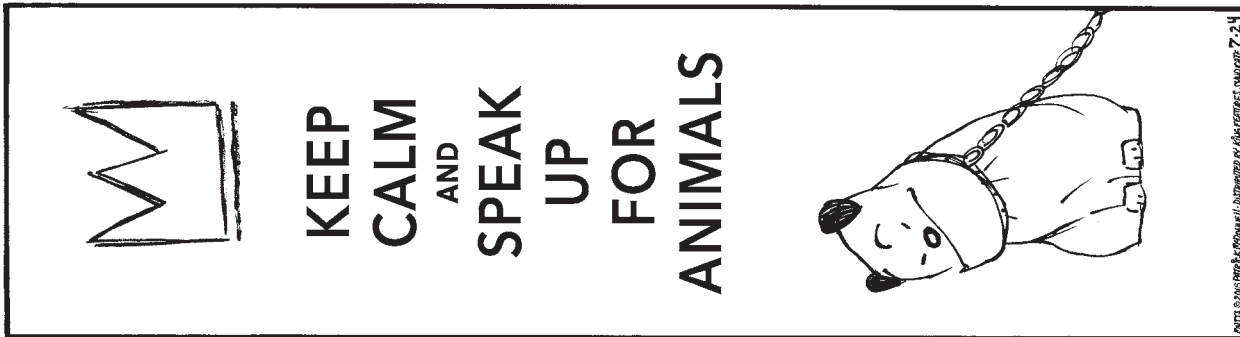
Teva has offered to buy Mylan for \$40.1 billion, or \$82 per share. Mylan says that's too low, and its wants to go ahead with a previous offer to buy Perrigo, an Irish company that makes over-the-counter medicines and other products. Mylan's valued its latest offer for Perrigo at \$34.1 billion, or \$232.23 per share in cash and stock, buy Perrigo disputed its value of the bid and rejected it.

In a press release, the foun-

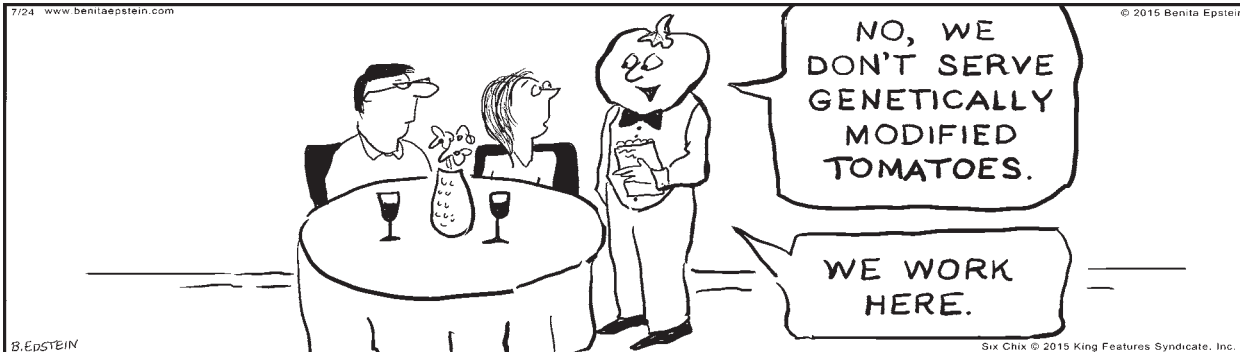
dation said Thursday that a takeover by Teva would put the interests of Mylan and its stakeholders at risk, and said it opposes a sale to Teva but won't take a position on the Perrigo deal.

Teva, which had taken a 4.6-percent stake in Mylan, said it disagreed with the foundation and added the move could deprive shareholders of the value they could gain from a combination of Teva and Mylan. □

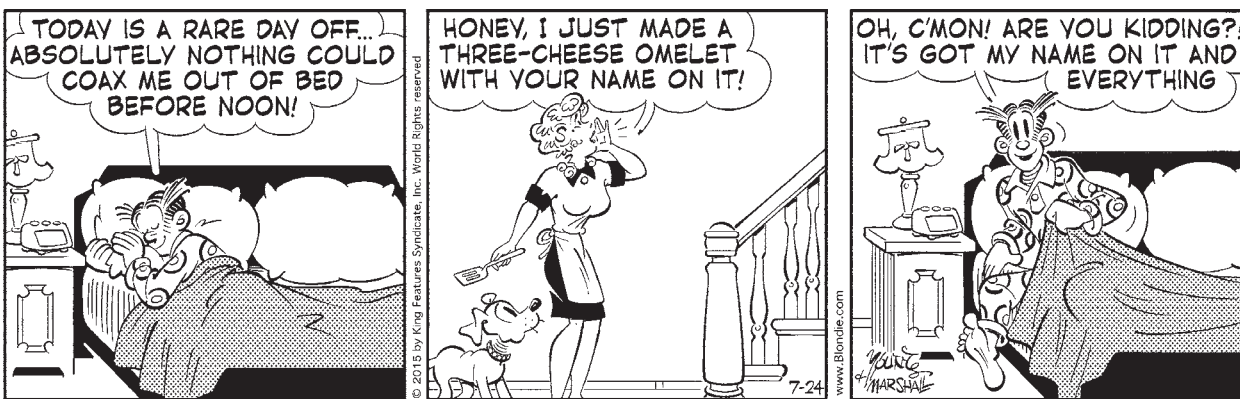
Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	2	5	6		3	7	4	
			8					
				4				
3		9						4
	5					2		
1						9		3
			2					
			1					
	6	1	5		7	8	9	

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 7/24

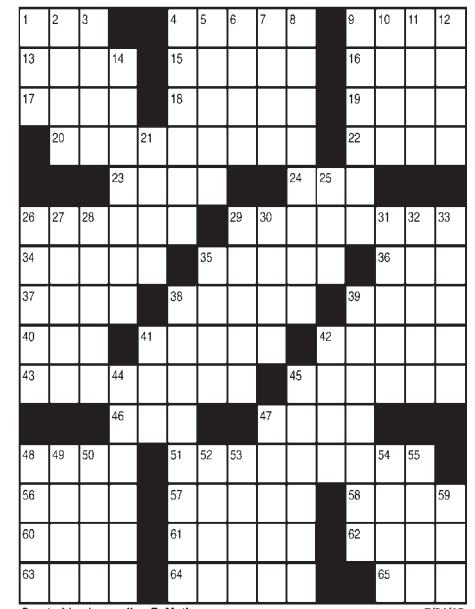
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

1	9	2	4	5	8	6	7	3
7	8	3	1	6	2	5	4	9
6	4	5	3	7	9	1	2	8
4	3	1	7	2	5	8	9	6
5	2	8	6	9	4	3	1	7
9	6	7	8	3	1	4	5	2
3	1	9	2	4	6	7	8	5
8	5	6	9	1	7	2	3	4
2	7	4	5	8	3	9	6	1

ACROSS

- 1 Grunt of disgust
- 4 Hate
- 9 Good fortune
- 13 Aretha's music
- 15 Window covering
- 16 Strong __ ox
- 17 Seaweed
- 18 TV's "Days of Our __"
- 19 Former Atty. Gen. Janet __
- 20 To one's __; causing harm
- 22 Expanded
- 23 Keep __ on; watch closely
- 24 "Roses __ red, violets..."
- 26 Bits of parsley
- 29 Driver
- 34 Linda Lavin's TV role
- 35 Clever; tricky
- 36 Mutt
- 37 Military post
- 38 Elementary school grade
- 39 Employ
- 40 90" from NNW
- 41 Picture border
- 42 Door hanger's metal piece
- 43 Lifesavers
- 45 Tattered
- 46 Once __ blue moon
- 47 Walkway
- 48 Wooden shoe
- 51 Take the place of; override
- 56 Midwestern state
- 57 Bring together
- 58 Bodies of water
- 60 Bleachers level
- 61 Makes angry
- 62 Waterproof covering
- 63 Finishes
- 64 Chris of tennis
- 65 Winged insect



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 7/24/15

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

A	B	C	S	O	M	E	G	A	A	L	L	S
D	R	A	T	B	U	L	L	S	L	O	O	T
D	A	T	A	A	G	L	O	W	A	L	G	A
S	Y	S	T	E	M	S	B	A	B	B	L	E
				U	M	A	M	A	N	I	A	
A	D	I	E	U	A	I	L	S	M	I	L	E
B	A	N	S	A	S	S	L	O	A	D	E	R
O	F	F	I	N	H	U	M	A	N	A	G	O
D	O	E	S	N	T	S	O	B	C	H	A	D
E	E	R	I	E	F	E	B	W	H	O	L	E
				S	P	E	E	D	B	E	A	
S	C	U	T	T	L	E	B	A	N	G	K	O
P	O	K	E	E	B	B	E	D	R	E	N	O
O	V	E	R	C	L	A	N	G	I	N	T	O
T	E	S	S	T	E	R	S	E	N	O	O	K

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DOWN

- 1 Neighbor of Canada; abbr.
- 2 Valuable ore
- 3 Enormous
- 4 Speaks without preparation
- 5 Teacup edges
- 6 __-nots; paupers
- 7 Unlock
- 8 Said again
- 9 Bigger
- 10 Drug addict
- 11 Walking stick
- 12 Recognize
- 14 Frame of crossed wood strips
- 21 Become furious
- 25 Trigger's rider
- 26 Curved sword
- 27 747 or B-29
- 28 Ascends
- 29 Injures
- 30 Bad guy
- 31 Cake coating
- 32 Sudden increase
- 33 Cornered
- 35 Scorch
- 38 Hold dear; cherish
- 49 Cut of pork
- 50 Was in the red
- 52 USC or UCLA
- 53 Stack
- 54 Unable to hear
- 55 British peer
- 59 Undercover agent

Ramadi

Continued from page 8

Carter visited the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service Academy, where he watched Iraqi soldiers maneuver and fire at silhouette targets at a range. Some soldiers wore partial or full face masks. "Your forces have performed so very well, so very bravely," Carter told them. "And I know that you have suffered great losses too, but I just wanted to tell you that it is very clear to us in Washington what a capable force this is. So it's a privilege for us to be your partners." The Iraqi troops advancing on Anbar and others are being trained by the approximately 3,360 troops now in Iraq who are also advising Iraqi commanders on battle plans, and providing security for U.S. personnel and facilities. The U.S., joined by several coalition partners, also is conducting airstrikes daily

to chip away at IS' grip on large parts of Iraq. American military leaders have said they would recommend to Obama that he approve moving U.S. military advisers and perhaps special operations forces closer to the front lines if they believed it would make a decisive difference at certain stages of the Iraqi campaign. Warren said they have not done so yet. Obama's critics in Congress complain that he is missing an opportunity to swiftly defeat the Islamic State by not sending U.S. ground combat troops or at least placing military advisers with Iraqi units to make them more effective. After Iraqi troops abandoned Ramadi in early May, handing IS its biggest battlefield victory of 2015, Carter caused a stir when he said Iraq's army "just showed no will to fight." That frank assessment exposed a central Iraqi weakness born of the country's sectarian split. □

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Scientists find closest thing yet to Earth-sun twin system

MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer
 CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

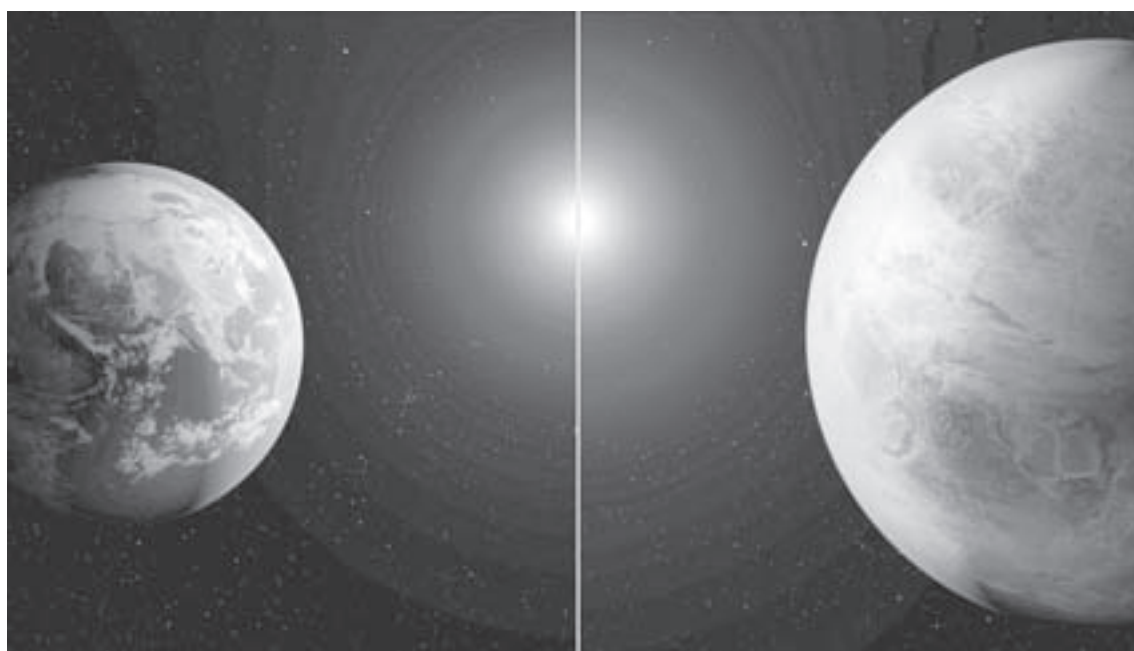
(AP) — Scientists have identified a “close cousin” to Earth that’s orbiting a sun-like star and might harbor life.

“It is the closest thing that we have to another place that somebody else might call home,” said Jon Jenkins from NASA’s Ames Research Center in California. The researchers announced their discovery Thursday based on observations from NASA’s Kepler space telescope.

This older, bigger cousin to Earth is called Kepler-452b. What makes this planet remarkable is that it orbits its star at about the same distance that Earth orbits the sun. What’s more, its home star looks to be similar to our sun. Based on what scientists know today, Jenkins noted it’s the nearest thing to another Earth-sun twin system.

“Today the Earth is a little less lonely because there’s a new kid on the block,” Jenkins said during a news conference. He led the team that discovered Kepler-452b.

The last Kepler discovery that had scientists gushing was just over a year ago. That close-to-Earth-size planet, Kepler-186f, also was in the habitable zone of its star. But that faint dwarf star was unlike our sun.



This artist’s rendering made available by NASA on Thursday, July 23, 2015 shows a comparison between the Earth, left, and the planet Kepler-452b.

John Grunsfeld, NASA’s science mission chief, emphasized that the exoplanet system identified Thursday — “a pretty good close cousin to the Earth and our sun” — is the closest so far. “And I really emphasize the ‘so far.’”

The planet-hunting Kepler will keep churning out new discoveries, Grunsfeld noted, and possibly find even better matches for “Earth 2.0.”

Kepler was launched in 2009 and has nearly 5,000 potential exoplanets to its credit — worlds beyond our solar system. It is helping to address such fundamental questions as where do we come from and where are we headed, and arguably

the biggest question of all: Are we alone in the universe?

Grunsfeld said thanks to Kepler’s latest finding, we’re taking “one small step in answering that question today.”

While scientists are uncertain whether Planet 452b is rocky like Earth, they believe there’s a better than even chance it is.

As for the age and size, it is about 6 billion years old, 1.5 billion years older than Earth, and 60 percent larger in diameter than our home planet. Its star, Kepler 452, is also older and bigger, as well as brighter than our sun.

If the planet is indeed rocky, geologists believe its mass would be five times that of Earth and its gravity would be twice Earth’s. (That’s right, you would weigh twice as much there.) Its atmosphere would be thicker and have more clouds, and any volcanoes would likely still be active.

Planet 452b takes 385 days to orbit its star, just a little

more than Earth takes for a one-year lap. It’s just a bit farther from its star than Earth is from our sun. That’s important because it makes the planet ripe, potentially, for liquid water on the surface. And water could mean life.

The planet is in a solar sys-

tem that is 1,400 light years from our own, located in the Constellation Cygnus, or swan.

“So pack your bags, it’s a long trip,” joked Jenkins.

Planet 452b is among more than 500 new entries listed in the Kepler team’s latest catalog of exoplanet candidates released Thursday. Kepler identifies potential planets by looking for periodic blips against the brightness of stars — some 150,000 stars to be exact.

Of those 500-plus new potential planets, 12 are less than twice Earth’s diameter and also orbiting in the so-called habitable zone of their star, also known as the just-right Goldilocks zone.

Kepler 452b is the first of those 12 to be confirmed as a true planet, thanks to ground observations.

Altogether, the catalog now includes 4,696 exoplanet candidates. Slightly more than 1,000 of them — 1,030 — are confirmed to be planets. □

Associated Press

Kiwi DNA study reveals bird lost color vision

BERLIN (AP) — Scientists say they have sequenced the genome of the brown kiwi for the first time, revealing that the shy, flightless bird likely lost its ability to see colors after it became nocturnal tens of millions of years ago.

Inspection of the kiwi’s DNA also showed greater diversity than in other birds in genes responsible for smell, indicating that New Zealand’s national animal can probably detect a wider range of odors — another useful adaptation for a species that prefers living in the dark.

The study, by scientists at

University of Leipzig, Germany, and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, was published Thursday in the journal *Genome Biology*.

Diana Le Duc, one of the authors, said the kiwi lost its color vision once that ability ceased to be an evolutionary advantage because it was active mainly at night. By comparing the mutation responsible for this change to the same genetic sequence for other birds, the researchers estimated that it occurred some 35 million years ago, after the kiwi came to New Zealand, she said. □

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Strapped to flying Airbus, Tom Cruise muses on camera angle

GEORGE JAHN
Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — Imagine this. You're strapped to the outside of a flying jetliner, thousands of feet above ground and rapidly rising. What would be going through your head?

"You're thinking about the lighting, the angle, how's the shot," says Tom Cruise or his latest hair-raising stunt in "Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation."

"Plus, you want to live through it."

In Vienna on Thursday for the world premiere of their film, Cruise and other leads in the cast talked to The Associated Press about its making — and how they already miss the months of hard work that went into the fifth in the Mission: Impossible series.

With part of the film playing in the Austrian capital, the choice of Vienna made sense. One of the most suspenseful episodes takes the audience to the city's ornate opera house where Cruise, as Ethan Hunt, plays a deadly game of hide-and-go seek members of The Syndicate, a dark force bent on destroying the earth — and while they're

at it, killing Austria's chancellor.

One of the shots fired at the Austrian politician before his car is blown up is by Ilsa Faust.

Played by Swedish actress Rebecca Ferguson, she appears by turns to be a baddie then Hunt's ally. It all turns out well in the end, both in the film and for Ferguson who says she has grown through the experience.

"It's been such a ride, when it comes to challenging yourself, physically working alongside Tom Cruise," she said. Ferguson, who trained intensely for weeks for the physicality she displayed in the film's fighting scenes, called the experience "exhausting, exhilarating and ... intoxicating," adding: "Now I'm sort of decommissioning, realizing what actually has happened."

Ditto for the regulars. Simon Pegg as Hunt sidekick Benji Dunn, has seen his share of Mission: Impossible sequels — and wants more.

"It's something I relish," he said. "When I'm on Mission Impossible, I don't want to be doing anything else."

He tipped the hat to director and screen writer Chris-

topher McQuarrie when asked how the improbable becomes believable in the film.

McQuarrie said Pegg was "able to really invest the script with a sense of impossibility and adventure — but also with character and things that made the characters more relatable and more real.

"No matter how spectacular the action is, if you don't care about the people involved in the action, then it's meaningless."

But ultimately, the latest Mission: Impossible is about the action — like all others before it. Wearing contact lenses to protect his eyes from specks of debris, Cruise hangs on the Airbus, scrapes his knee on the asphalt in a breathtaking motorcycle chase and holds his breath for a full six minutes under water as he battles — and ultimately destroys — The Syndicate.

He smiles, when asked if he is close to the limit with his ever-more daring stunts.

"I've always done that, pushing myself," he said. "I'm thinking about the audience and what can I do to entertain the audience." □



U.S. actor Tom Cruise, center, poses with fans as he arrives for the Mission Impossible – Rogue Nation World Premiere, at the Vienna State Opera in Vienna, Austria, Thursday, July 23, 2015. Associated Press

Memoir by mother of Columbine shooter coming in February

NEW YORK (AP) — A memoir by the mother of Columbine shooter Dylan Klebold is scheduled for 2016, and will be launched with a prime-time interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer.

Crown Publishers told The Associated Press on Thursday that Sue Klebold's "A Mother's Reckoning" will be published Feb. 16. The book was first announced last fall, but didn't have a title or release date.

Sue Klebold's interview with Sawyer will air around publication. It will be Klebold's first-ever TV interview.

Klebold has said the Sandy Hook shootings of 2012 helped convince her to share her story, and that she is donating any profits



This April 28, 1999 file photo shows a woman standing among 15 crosses posted on a hill above Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., in remembrance of the 15 people who died during a school shooting on April 20, 1999.

Associated Press

to mental health charities and research.

In 1999, Dylan Klebold and fellow senior student Eric

Harris killed 12 students and one teacher at the Colorado high school before taking their own lives. □

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DiCaprio gala raises over \$40M for environment

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Leonardo DiCaprio raised over \$40 million to help save the planet at an auction in Saint-Tropez, France, on Wednesday night.

The second annual Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation fundraising gala included a live auction with donated jewelry and artwork from the actor's personal collection, his publicist, Shawn Sachs, said Thursday. Naomi Campbell, Orlando Bloom and Kate Hudson attended the event, which included performances by Elton John and John Legend.

Other items in the auction included an estate on DiCaprio's private Belize island, Blackadore Caye, and a special travel package donated by Prince Albert II of Monaco.

DiCaprio, whose films include "Titanic" and "The Wolf of Wall Street," started the environmental foundation in 1998 to help preserve the environment and



In this Sept. 21, 2014 file photo, actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio speaks after accepting an award at the Clinton Global Citizen Awards dinner in New York.

Associated Press

habitats of wild animals. The money funds grants, public campaigns and media initiatives supported by the foundation.

DiCaprio, 40, serves on the board of several environmental organizations. He said he hopes to work with governments to protect critically endangered species and "conserve the jungles, coral reefs, and forest they call home." □

Swift apologizes to Minaj about tweet over VMA nominations

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Swift has apologized to Nicki Minaj for calling her out on Twitter regarding her MTV Video Music Awards nominations.

Swift tweeted Thursday that she thought she was "being called out" by Minaj. The singer added: "I missed the point, I misunderstood, then misspoke. I'm sorry, Nicki."

"That means so much Taylor, thank you," Minaj replied.

Minaj and Swift traded words Tuesday on Twitter after MTV announced the nominees for the VMAs, where Swift is the leader with nine. Minaj was upset she didn't earn a nomination for video of the year for "Anaconda." She launched a series of



In this Friday, July 10, 2015 file photo, singer Taylor Swift performs during her "1989" world tour at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

Associated Press

tweets about how slim women earn top nominations and later said black female entertainers don't get enough credit for their influence on pop culture. □



In this July 21, 2015 photo, 17-year-old rapper Silento poses for a portrait in New York. Silento's song, "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)," has sold 892,168 tracks and boasts 150 million on-demand streams, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Associated Press

Dance craze, hit song gives rapper Silento a breakthrough

MESFIN FEKADU

AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Silento, the 17-year-old rapper who's having a pop culture moment with the dance craze to his debut song, says he wants to be a role model to the young kids who have posted videos dancing to his tune.

His "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)" has continued to rise on the charts and gain millions of views on YouTube, becoming popular among children who have imitated the dances he references in the song, including Nae Nae and the Stanky Legg.

"I always wanted to be a role model," said Silento, born Ricky Hawke, in a recent interview. "I always (wanted) to be the one everybody look at and copy off of."

Silento's song has sold 892,168 tracks and boasts 150 million on-demand streams, according to Nielsen SoundScan. It has peaked at No. 3 on Billboard's Hot 100 songs

chart and No. 2 on the R&B/Hip-Hop songs and Rap songs charts, respectively.

Fans — old and young — have posted videos dancing to the popular song. NBA player Stephen Curry and his wife posted a video last week of their daughter, Riley, dancing to the song as she celebrated her third birthday.

"I was just like, 'Wow! Wow!' That's all you can say," Silento said of the song's success. "I just be smiling. It looks like me when I was little. I used to do the same thing."

The performer, a senior in high school in Atlanta, said he came up with the idea for "Watch Me" at school. After recording the song, he uploaded it to SoundCloud in January and posted videos on Instagram of people dancing to the track. Capitol Music Group caught wind of the rising hit.

"They came like that second week. I got an email saying, 'I've seen your

song last week and I see it this week and it exploded,'" recalled Silento, who signed with the record label. "I was like, 'Yeah, that's that message I was looking for.'"

He said that instead of releasing an EP or album, "first we're going to push out more singles," adding his next single is "going to be a record for the ladies." Silento, who grew up admiring Usher, Chris Brown, Mariah Carey, Ciara and Mary J. Blige, said his sound is a mix of rapping and singing.

"I might throw another dance song in there. I got a couple up my sleeve, but right now I'm not trying to keep people too focused on me as a dancer, I'm trying to show them myself as an artist," he said.

And what does his stage name mean?

"I used to always tell people what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it, so it's less talk and more action." □

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